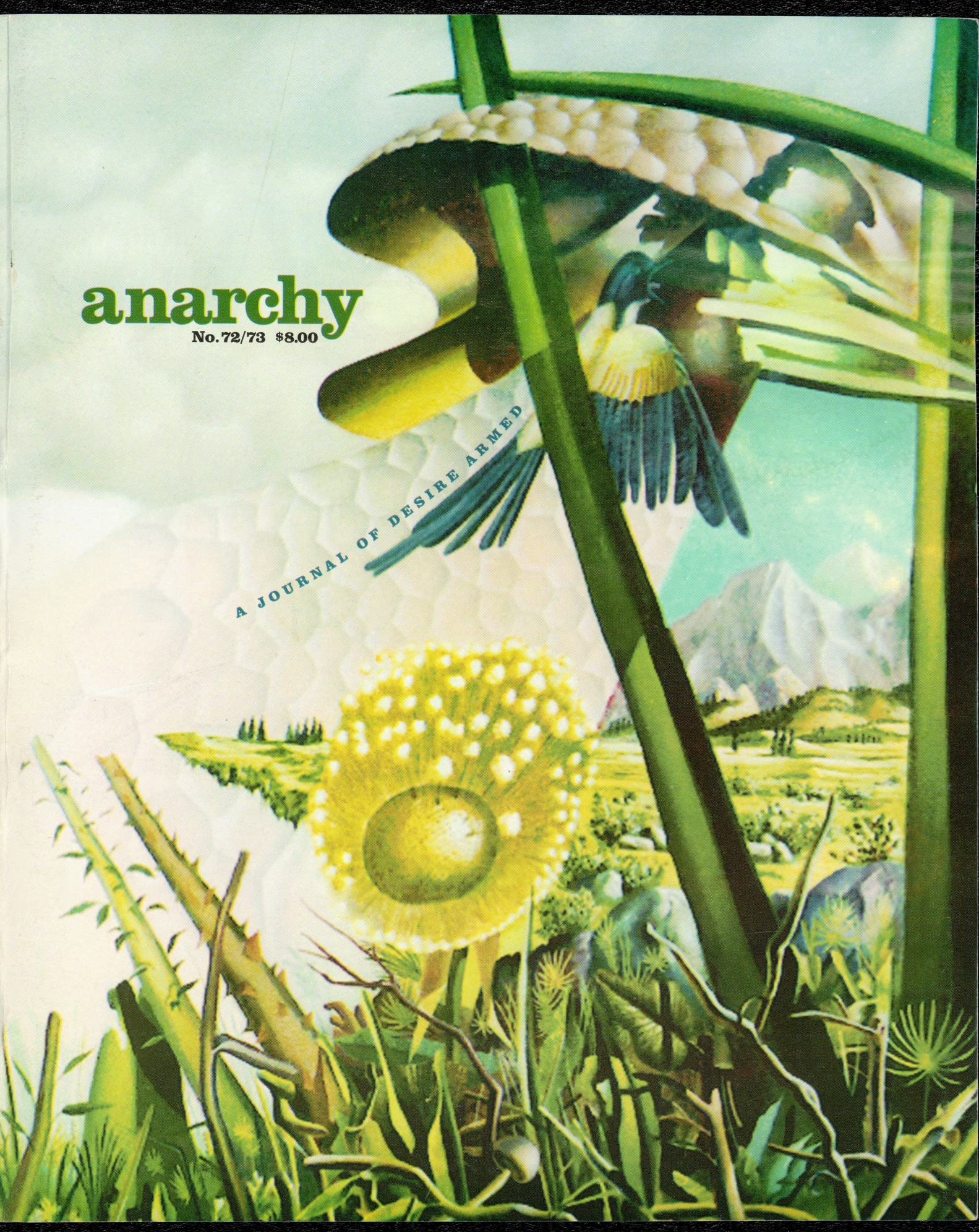
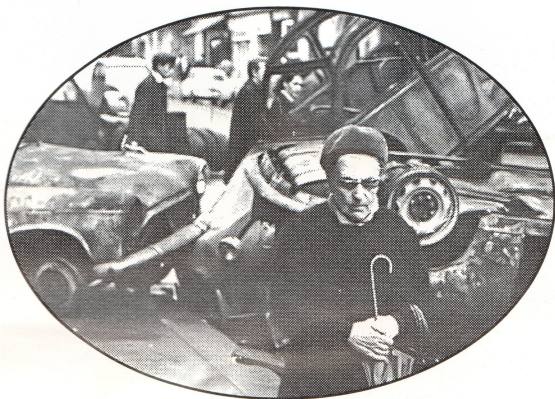


anarchy

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A JOURNAL OF DESIRE ARMED





The Winter of #Occupy

THE VAGUE CALL FOR #OCCUPY WALL STREET almost immediately — and thankfully — spun away from the hip cynics at *Adbusters*. Rather than keeping to the parameters of purely symbolic and temporary protest, Occupiers in NYC began to take cues from Oaxaca, Brazil, Madison, the Arab Spring, the Spanish and Greek *indignados*, and the campus occupations of 2009, reclaiming public space and property for extended periods, often in defiance of elected officials, the police, and mainstream media.

I was present at the second of three pre-occupy meetings for setting up #OccupyOakland, where the organizers set a tone for what would follow, much of it pleasantly surprising to this old and mostly jaded critic. The meeting started on time! And while there was the usual left-activist attempt to make certain that everything remained “peaceful” during the takeover of public space and for as long as that space could be maintained as an occupation, a rather insignificant number of people there were interested in making any such proclamations. Unexpected. Also unexpected was that at the first meeting — and in sharp contrast to most other #Occupies I knew about — the #OO organizers had decided to refuse negotiations with the police or the city administration, and would not allow politicians (at least the professional, electable sort) to participate; along with No Asking Permission, the stance of No Demands was to be honored. It looked like the predominant organizing principles were to be anarchist.

However, there seemed to be a bashful — and I believe inaccurate — assumption that anarchists and other folks who appreciate horizontal organizational and decision-making tools are still in the minority among social change activists. This is the only explanation I can come up

with for the explicit discouraging of political discussions at the pre-occupation meetings and at the first few General Assemblies at Frank Ogawa/Oscar Grant Plaza — where and when *should* political discussions take place then? Enough objections to this suppression made their way through the appropriate facilitators to the point where they could no longer be ignored, and finally political discussion was opened up at the GA; the first were about unwanted sexual advances and interpersonal violence at the Plaza — important topics to be sure, but where were the discussions about the strategic and practical consequences (both for occupiers *and* the forces of law and order) of reclaiming public space or overturning the legal parameters of private property? Another early and important issue was a proposal, in a move both to honor the centuries-long indigenous resistance and place Oakland on the leading edge of making that recognition central to this movement, to rename the encampment “Decolonize Oakland.” Partly due to the way the proposal was written and partly because of some of the usual patronizing attitudes infusing social change activists, the proposal was defeated (although many continue to refer to it that way despite the GA’s decision).

Perhaps the anarchist organizers thought that political conversations should remain strictly on the level of tactics, the better to avoid inevitable conflicts; but these conflicts (philosophical, analytical, practical) won’t magically disappear just because nobody talks about them face to face. So rather than the usual lowest-common-denominator of activist coalitions, there is *no* common denominator beyond the indiscriminate “We Are the 99%.”

This leaves the door wide open for white liberals who’ve only recently noticed that they actually aren’t entitled to a safety net; Leftists

who are desperate for cadre even as they become less and less relevant to people's real lives; union bureaucrats wanting to rope more people into their hopelessly corrupt rackets; and the usual assortment of progressive pimps for the Democratic Party – all trying to insinuate themselves into positions of behind-the-scenes influence, which has taken place too many times to count. Just to be a camp in front of City Hall filled with disenfranchised and marginalized people was enough for most of the non-professional activists; and even that (with its attendant visible concentration of the many social ills built into a post-industrial capitalist environment – of course quickly identified and exaggerated by mainstream and right-wing commentators) still has a strong political content beyond the banal observations of economic injustice. An associated problem is that this concentration of addiction and mental health challenges, along with a rapid resort to interpersonal violence among non-activists was accompanied by the reflexive activist adoption of the role of unpaid social worker.

I heard Angela Davis extolling the virtues of #OO one evening, trying to colonize what folks were doing by insisting that those sorts of activities had been initiated by the Black Panthers. *Pace* Professor Davis, most parts of #OO have very little – if anything – in common with the various activities of the patriarchal paramilitarists of her past. At the peak of their influence, the Panthers wouldn't have been able to mobilize the numbers seen at more than a few #OO events, especially given their explicit attachment to a hierarchical organizational form. In the meantime, the largest protests and gatherings are organized horizontally, a testament to the broader influence of anti-authoritarian ideas.

Shutting down parts of the Port of Oakland on November 2 and December 12, where thousands of people mingled in the streets (in the notable absence of the cops), created an intoxicating and contagious atmosphere that had much more to do with the festive environments of Burning Man and Oakland's Art Murmur. Sharing food, clothing, first aid, and child-minding; sharing skills and exchanging ideas; making posters and banners; starting conversations with complete strangers (my favorite overheard statement: "I never thought I'd see

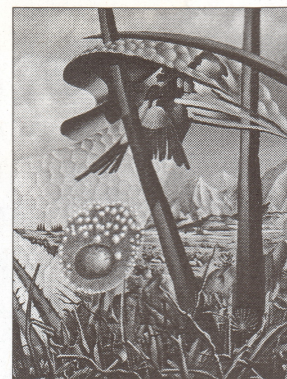
anything like this")... all of that happened within a context of tentative and, yes, stumbling attempts at creating some kind of authentic (albeit temporary) community, one unmediated by commerce and other relations of institutionalized domination. For a few days, a few weeks, people were acting free. By being free. There were problems from the beginning to be sure – one wag commented that it was like a cross between a Rainbow Gathering and jail – but exercising freedom after a lifetime of exploitation and hierarchy is not easy or necessarily pretty (cf. Orwell on revolutionary Barcelona).

When Occupiers come out of hibernation (certainly before this issue is back from the printer), I'd like to participate in a rejuvenated momentum of reclaiming more than just public space, valuable as that is for showcasing various symptoms of capitalism in crisis. Setting up camps in plazas and parks means that most #Occupies kettled themselves; people serious about opposing the ruling class and their mercenaries need to think more strategically, and shouldn't give the cops and politicians any voluntary assistance. Taking over buildings and other defensible spaces is definitely on the agenda.

I'd like to see more anarchists come out as anarchists (the "Demystifying Anarchism" flyer was a good beginning) to explain why we use horizontal forms of organizing and decision making, if only to help to counter the machinations of bureaucrats and identity politicians. Hierarchs don't like being forced to use those forms, and will do anything they can to bypass them whenever possible, using any number of excuses.

I still don't know what #OO means in terms of lasting anti-capitalist and anti-statist projects, but I know that anarchist-influenced tools and methods have made reluctant and/or accidental radicals out of many. Despite not being shy about pointing out what I consider to be significant shortcomings, most of the observations I've been sharing with my friends since early October are notable for their unselfconsciously optimistic tone. There were many moments during my time at the Plaza and at the shutdowns when I was overcome with joy, knowing that I was part of something important; some of those moments brought tears to my eyes. Who could have imagined?

On the Cover:



Ton Haring

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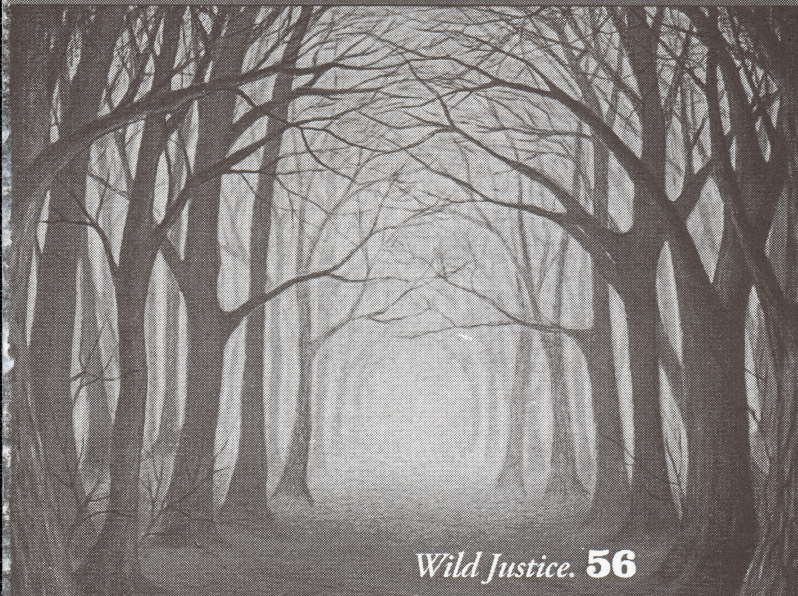
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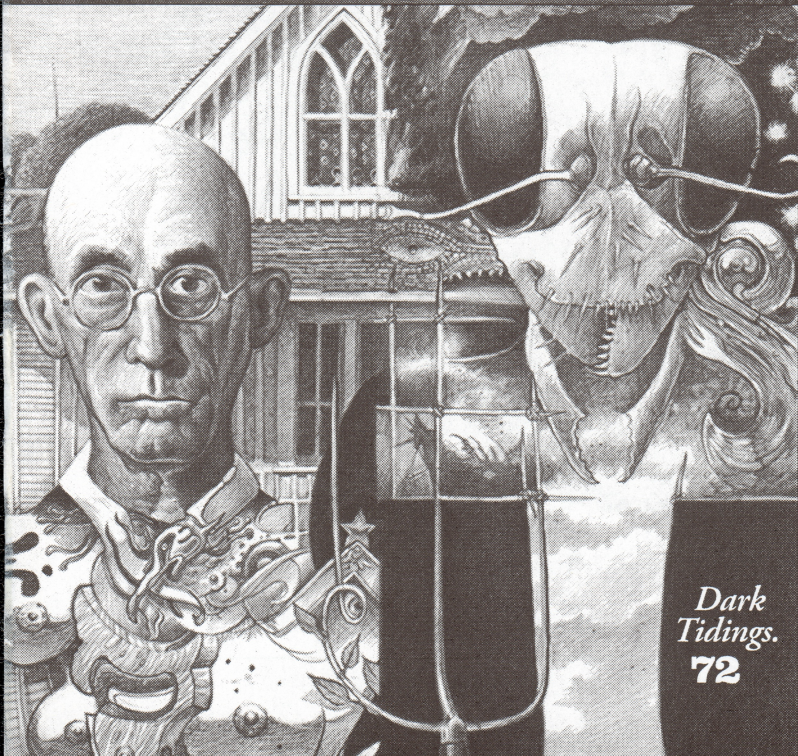
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Dark Tidings.
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Enemies Society:



An Anthology of Individualist & Egoist Thought

OCCUPY EVERYTHING

Anarchists in the
Occupy Movement
2009-2011



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Inside ANARC

WELCOME TO ANOTHER DOUBLE ISSUE of AJODA. We are not calling it a “special” double issue because we are realistic enough to understand that we cannot, at least for the foreseeable future, return to our twice-yearly publishing schedule; life (such as it is within the confines of late post-industrial capitalism) intervenes. Whether the challenges are emotional or economic, the obstacles to the amount of time and energy we are able to dedicate to this labor of love remain. So we will continue with double issues.

The first US Occupy cycle — eruption, culmination, repression, and decline — happened too quickly for us to make many comments and observations on it beyond the editorial; we invite interested folks to contribute essays, columns, letters, and more photos to what will certainly be an important topic of conversation here and elsewhere. While Occupy is certainly not finished, whatever it was from September through November will not be the same as it reemerges in the spring. As people become re-energized after hibernation, the movement (if we can call it that) will necessarily be leaner, and, with any luck, meaner. The attacks on more impolite anarchists in various locations began long before the most recent one by Rebecca Solnit and the hypocritical meltdown of Chris Hedges; here in the East Bay, pundits, cops, and politicians (in power and in training)

were already practiced at this, targeting and denouncing anarchists as “provocateurs,” “outside agitators,” and other choice epithets for either instigating or exacerbating the Oscar Grant riots and the student protests and occupations. The recent denunciations of the so-called hardcore Occupy Oakland anarchists (conveniently cloaked by only talking about the Black Bloc) is only the most recent in what is bound to be a more concerted effort on the part of progressives and liberals to sideline or otherwise cut off the radicals from Occupy, the better to use the dissatisfaction of “the 99%” to get more Democratic Party bureaucrats elected to state and federal legislatures. Perhaps a radical backlash — in strategy, if not in analysis — will be the result of this attempted purge.

C.A.L. Press has two pamphlets available; ordering information is on our subscription page. The first is a reprint of “The Anarchist Beast: The Anti-Anarchist Crusade in Periodical Literature (1884-1906).” The analysis of the anti-anarchist strategies of various authors of a hundred years ago retains too many parallels with the denunciations of anarchists in Occupy. The second is Bob Black’s excellent “Debunking Democracy,” which is a must-read for all those who continue to grasp at the last refuge of statecraft in crisis. Despite its origins as thoroughly pejorative (like “anarchy”), to its contemporary embrace by virtually all promoters of government,

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Democracy remains one of the last spooks (to use Stirner's derisive expression for fixed ideas) among radicals. This detailed examination makes a convincing case that it's high time to dispense with the pretense. More pamphlets are in the planning stages.

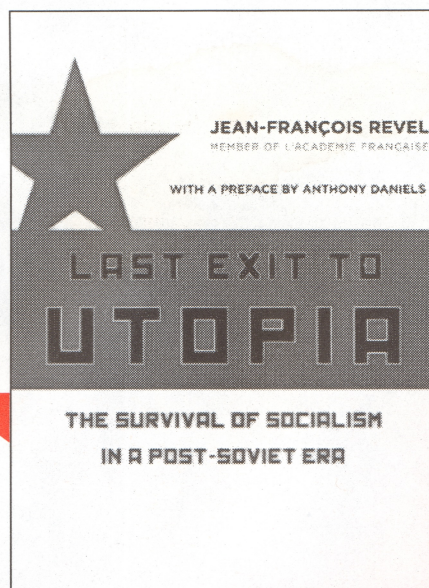
Speaking of Black, "Wild Justice" is the enlarged essay format of a workshop he presented at a recent BASTARD anarchist theory conference. We continue with the critical discussions brought up by *The Coming Insurrection*, including part two of Lupus' fine ode to insurrection as well as Uri Gordon's bleak but encouraging analysis of the current crossroads of radical contestation. Another critical overview of *TCI* will be published in our next issue. We are honored to be able to reprint Michael Moorcock's engaging and often funny survey of reactionary science fiction (his similar survey of the fantasy genre, "Epic Pooh," appears at <http://www.revolutionsf.com/article.php?id=953> and also in *Arena* #2).

We are happy to have a continuing relationship with Eberhardt Press for printing, and Little Black Cart to help with distribution, but we still need to have more of our readers and supporters helping out to keep this project viable. Get in touch if you'd like to assist in getting *Anarchy* into the hands of even more people for whom critical engagement in the world of radical anti-authoritarian anti-politics is increasingly important.



Marcel Bakker & Bernard Dumaine

No Exit from the Age of Reason



Last Exit to Utopia: The Survival of Socialism in a Post-Soviet Era

by Jean-François Revel
translated by Diarmid V.C. Cammell
Encounter Books, 2009
348 pages, cloth. \$23.95

Review by Ralph Dumont

JEAN-FRANÇOIS REVEL, WHO DIED in 2006, was a French intellectual of the right who had once been a socialist. He was the editor of the weekly *L'Express* and a member of the French Academy. As with his American counterparts known as neoconservatives, something about the radicalism of the 1960s repelled him and turned him toward fulsome praise of the Free Market. There was not an exact equivalent of the neoconservative movement in France; the closest thing to it were the "New Philosophers," whose ranks were filled heavily with former *soixante-huitard* Maoists, mediocrities of the left transformed into mediocrities of the right. Revel was of an older generation, but his outlook was very similar to that group. French intellectuals of rightist bent no longer have a great empire of their own to champion, so they tend to admire and justify the power of the United States. This is certainly the case with the New Philosophers, and so it was with the very pro-American Revel. His fans like to describe him as a kind of French Orwell, which is quite a stretch.

This book (originally published in 2000 in French as *La Grande Parade: Essai sur la survie de l'utopie socialiste*) is an attempt to discredit the Socialist as well as Communist left, particularly in France, and put more nails in the coffin of an apparently defeated Bolshevism along with its ideological heirs. Encounter Books is an arm of Encounter for Culture and Education, Inc., a conservative think tank founded by Peter Collier, who, with David Horowitz, is the co-editor of "The Anti-Chomsky Reader." The current publisher, Roger Kimball, is co-editor of *The New Criterion*, an explicitly conservative literary monthly. Themes of

Encounter's other publications include broadsides against Obama, support for the War on Terror, and anti-immigrant scare-mongering. On its jacket, *Last Exit* is puffed by Stephen Schwartz. Ha, what fine reactionary company.

Why, then, would anarchists care what M. Revel thinks? For me, it is fascinating to see an intelligence of his caliber put to such disappointing purpose. Revel savages Communism, Socialism, and leftism very well and articulately, if irritatingly; his conclusions are so pig-headedly wrong in this rearguard salvo of the Cold War. He condemns state socialisms of Soviet, Chinese, and Third World varieties, primarily for their abuses of human rights and economic failures. Social democrats, as allies and enablers of the Communists, don't fare much better in his worldview or that of this friend François Furet, who said, "Socialists have something of a Bolshevik super-ego, and for this reason they greeted the fall of the Berlin Wall with dismay" (92). The terminology Revel uses in *Last Exit* points towards a curious and somewhat amusing difference in political discourse between France and the United States. He proclaims himself a champion of liberalism, which will cause some confusion because what he means by this is practically the opposite of what liberalism refers to in the United States. Revel's liberalism is of the "classical" kind, perhaps better labeled as libertarianism, but without anarchist pretensions. An atheist, Revel was no champion of the traditional right associated with the Catholic Church in France. Nor was he ever a French nationalist of the Gaullist variety. At several points in this book, he expresses admiration for the Anglo-American version of *laissez-faire*

capitalism in opposition to French and European *dirigisme* (unapologetic government involvement in the economy).

A recurring theme of **Last Exit** is the insistence that Communism be equated with Nazism in the enormity of its crimes. To that end, he showcases *The Black Book of Communism* (edited by Stéphane Courtois and appearing in 1997), a massive 850-page accounting of atrocities carried out by Communist regimes and movements everywhere since the Bolshevik coup in 1917. Tallying the carnage of the Bolshevik/Civil War period, Stalin's purges, the famines in Ukraine and China, the Khmer Rouge killing fields in Cambodia, and every kind of gulag, repression, and massacre carried out by sub-Leninist dictators in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the *Black Book* comes up with a figure of about 100 million victims of Communism, which would supposedly put Hitler to shame. The authors of the *Black Book* were all former Communists or fellow travelers who, like Revel, came to identify with Liberalism. **Last Exit** defends them against left critics who accused them of trying to rehabilitate fascism. Revel had in mind a particular practice, common in the days of the Comintern, in which the label "fascist" was applied as an indiscriminate smear against all critics or enemies of the Communist Party, including other leftists such as Trotskyists ("Hitler-Trotskyists") and social democrats ("social fascists"). In more recent times, this practice has been continued by Maoists and New Left ideologues, among others.

Revel points out a number of things that are sensible enough, although not especially illuminating. For example, he speaks of the hypocrisy of those who call for the prosecution of Pinochet but not of Castro. He emphasizes that Soviet repression was in full swing from the start and cannot be ascribed solely to the Stalin regime. It is also true that Nazi Germany was rather more like Stalin's Russia than it was

like Mussolini's Fascist regime in Italy, and that Italian Fascism, as execrable as it was, was still very far in degree from the totalitarianism of Germany and the USSR. Revel treats us to a comprehensive history of the perfidies of the French Communist Party and lambastes the Socialists for cooperating with it. Communism in certain European countries, particularly France and Italy, owed its post-World War II ascendancy to its antifascist credentials. Because of their prominence in the partisan resistance movements against Nazi occupation during the war, the Communists enjoyed, for a time, a general respect that would not otherwise have accrued to them. Revel, who himself was part of the Resistance (not, presumably, the Communist-flavored one), stakes out his brand of liberal democratic anti-Communism thusly: "We have not absolved, on the pretext of an anti-Bolshevik crusade, the French *collabos* who fought on the side of the Nazis or who gave them ideological support, even if we share their view that Communism is unacceptable" (83). While acknowledging that only a small minority of the French were active members of the Resistance, Revel denounces as false the claim that a majority of the population supported the Vichy government. He calls this the "You have all been pro-Nazi so leave Communism alone" argument (170).

These polemics form part of a conflict over the meaning of the Second World War (and the First one as well) that plays out in France very differently than it does in the United States, where the memory of the war tends to be uncomplicatedly triumphalist. The redness of the Resistance, and recognition of the predominant role of the Soviet Union in the defeat of Nazi Germany, has particular resonance in France, where to this day a Paris metro station is named "Stalingrad." After France's defeat and humiliation by Germany, and its eclipse as a world power by its Anglo-American allies, anti-imperialist

ideology entailing ambivalence or outright hostility toward the United States became a significant force in the main stream of left and right alike. Revel was among those with an unambiguously sunny view of American intervention, which he saw as nothing less than the savior of civilization. Totalitarianism was "Europe's great modern invention," (273) from which the old continent had to be twice rescued by US armed forces and rebuilt economically by the infusion of American capital. If victory in the world wars led to the consolidation of an American imperium, bearing such effects as the global dominance of English and the ubiquity of Hollywood movies and McDonald's, it bothered Revel not in the slightest. "Take away anti-Americanism [and] there is little left of French political thought" (263).

The Vietnam/Indochina wars and their consequences constitute another raw historical wound that exercised Revel in a selective way. He was outraged by the plight of the boat people, the reeducation camps, and the crushing of dissidents in Vietnam, and of course by the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia. The Vietnamese "rescue" of Cambodia in 1979 was not so wonderful because it only replaced one totalitarian regime with a less murderous version of same; moreover, Khmer Rouge personnel were retained in the new government, and only Pol Pot was blamed for the mass killings. Listening to Revel, you would think that Communists alone were responsible for all the death and destruction in Indochina. You would never guess that the United States – and France – had any hand in it, or that they represented anything other than good guys in that conflict. Although he doesn't say it, the implication is that these post-1975 horrors could have been avoided if the United States had tried harder to win the war. The thesis Communism = Nazism, with its claim to absolute moral clarity, practically demands that all stops should have been pulled to

prevent Communist victory, no matter the cost. Yet he demurs from any statement quite so bold, probably because of the obvious dirtiness and brutality with which the US armed forces conducted this war, and his unspoken distaste for having to defend it. The posture of righteousness against Communism suffers a hiccup here. What would it have taken for the capitalist Free World Forces of Light to have won? How many more saturation bombing campaigns, defoliating carcinogenic chemicals, and massacres of peasants? Would the use of nuclear weapons have saved the day? One wonders if Revel pondered the extent to which it was the viciousness of this war that generated the reactive violence of the Weather Undergrounds, Baader-Meinhofs, and other Stalinoid nutjob sects of the 1960s and 70s that upset him so much.

Revel would have nothing of the progressivist argument that the Communist revolutions (coups, rather) taking power in Russia, Cuba, and Ethiopia, though ugly in so many ways, were nevertheless an improvement over the anciens régimes. But since he rejected revolution, you have to wonder whether he saw the anciens régimes as the lesser evils. Yes, we understand that the Bolsheviks were nogoodniks. But what about the pogromist White armies supported by the Western powers and the Japanese empire? And why was there a revolution in the first place? Does he want to talk about the alliance of Western democracies with the tsar's regime in the butchery of the Great War? It's well and good to denounce Fidel Castro's prisons and firing squads. But, again, why was there a revolution in the first place? A more careful look at these events in which Communists and/or anti-imperialists seized power in various countries would show that, in most cases, Communists and leftist-nationalists harnessed genuine popular insurrections by masses of peasants and, in some cases, workers. But in Revel's account, violent revolutions are

generated, and can only be generated, entirely by the small groups that claim to represent, in Rousseau's fashion, the General Will.

The failures of Communism and Marxism now hide, Revel says, behind a "utopian" attempt to salvage the communist idea from the Soviet wreckage. The entire structure of Communism is "organized around Utopia, that is, around the demand to let intentions pass for actions" (195). He traces the origins of left utopianism to Rousseau, whom he regards as a founding father of totalitarianism, and to the Jacobin phase of the French Revolution. But of the actual history of utopian movements since the nineteenth century he says nothing. If he's attacking critics of capitalism and bourgeois civilization for being utopians, then surely Fourier ought to have been on his hit list. Anarchism has been at various times in modern history a major force of contestation, but Revel pays almost no attention to it, save for one passing reference to anarchists in Spain as allies of the Communists in the Republican government. In this description, anarchists are in effect amalgamated with Communists, an ironic position for Revel to take given his objection to the Communists' abuse of the term "fascist." Revel would doubtless have rendered his own homage to Catalonia were he in fact deserving of a comparison with Orwell. No contemporary anarchists or left communists, named as such, make it onto his radar. When he criticizes the "ultra-left," he is referring primarily to Trotskyists and Maoists, although he also seems to use it as a blanket term encompassing all forces arrayed against globalized capitalism in the period after the Soviet collapse.

Revel claims that liberalism (that is, laissez-faire capitalism) is not an ideology, because it does not seek to build a perfect society. Of course this is ridiculous; any society built on making people sell their time and buy their

own survival is going to need to make people see their condition within it through as many veils of illusion as possible. Capitalism is actually the greatest manufacturer of utopia the world has ever seen. What could be more utopian than the notion that endless economic growth and rapacious consumption of the earth's natural resources can go on forever? As for democracy, it is true that of the various political regimes, it offers the biggest cage and the longest leash. The global division of labor among capitalist bosses and Communist bureaucrats entailed an essential kinship between left and right, and the importation of totalitarian elements into democratic states in what Debord called the "integrated spectacle." This process has accelerated with the permanent struggle against what politicians of all stripes call terrorism and the exceptional measures that it allegedly requires, undermining more and more the Rule of Law that is the putative norm for liberal democracy in its most developed and stable form. In **Last Exit**, Revel could feel confident about capital's ability to overcome economic dislocations such as the Asian economic crisis of 1997, and he made fun of those who saw that event as a harbinger of collapse. But now, with a global depression deepening amid multiplying crises of every description, it looks as if the splendid civilization of capital is running out of luck.

"Tyrants may wage war on each other. Saddam Hussein and the Ayatollah Khomeini may be locked in mortal struggle without either of them on that account turning miraculously into democrats" (83). This pious statement ignores the cynical manipulations of the US government, which supplied arms to both sides in that war. Revel talked of the threat posed by Saddam's "weapons of mass destruction" and approved of the sanctions against Iraq, which killed many thousands of people in that country without damaging the regime significantly. Subsequently,

several years of war in Iraq revealed the WMD paranoia to be a big fat hoax. Revel's book appeared shortly before 9/11 launched the great War on Terror, which has resulted in the endless quagmire of Afghanistan, a war being fought ostensibly against Islamist fundamentalists of the most reactionary stripe who were originally trained, funded, and supplied in the glorious anti-Communist cause.

If you wanted to compile a response to *The Black Book of Communism* in the form of a "black book of capitalism" (as was actually and promptly done in France after the appearance of the *BBC*), you would certainly find plenty of fodder for outrageous body counts. The historical crimes of capitalist elites in the so-called West since the era of mercantile colonialism and its alliance with European absolute monarchy would have to include the Atlantic slave trade, the conquest of the Americas and Australia, with the genocidal dispossession of native peoples, the atrocities of colonialism and old-school imperialism, probably the worst being the king of Belgium's bloody reign in the Congo, and the slaughter of the two big world wars as well as countless smaller national or subnational wars. All this blood under the table forms the background of today's spectacular consumer democracy. Needless to say, Revel takes no account of any of it.

Socialism, with or without quotation marks, of the Marxist-Leninist variety was only the *ideological* negation of capitalism, while in fact expressing its primitive form in countries where the bourgeoisie was weak or nonexistent. The capitalist mode of production in Russia, China, Vietnam, and many other countries could only progress in opposition to Western capital, which supported the aristocratic and semi-feudalistic regimes in those countries. The twentieth century's cycle of revolutions begun in Bolshevik Russia and ending in the aftermath of the Indochina wars and decolonization in

Africa did not threaten the domination of capital, but actually expanded it in the form of industrialization by state fiat, with state-controlled markets. Nor did they ever establish anything resembling a utopian concept of communism. Revel even seems to acknowledge this when he says, "the dictatorship of the proletariat has never been seen, and what has always

Where might the French insurrection of 1968 have gone but for the counter-revolutionary intervention of the Communist Party and the unions it controlled?

prevailed in Communist regimes has been the dictatorship of an oligarchy" (209). What these revolutions did was put in power bureaucrats who carried out a crude modernization that paved the way for a later *real* capitalist development, a process most readily seen in the recent cancerously prodigious economic growth of the People's Republic of China, which is now arguably the most capitalistic regime on the planet. To speak of the crimes of Communism, then, is really to speak of the crimes of the left wing of capital.

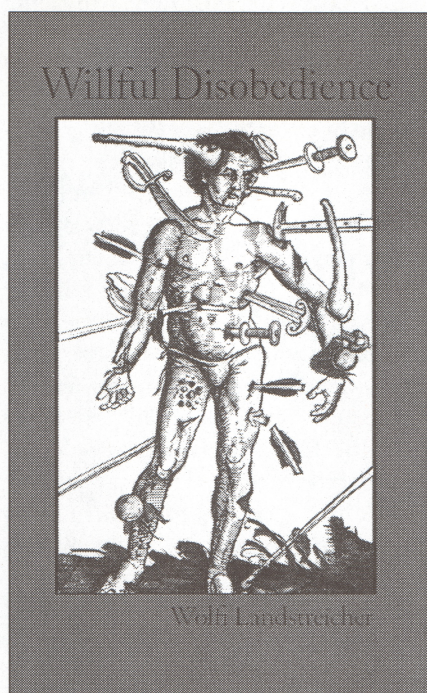
As for the unions and the Socialist and Communist parties in Western

countries, they too serve to uphold the capitalist system through their recuperative roles. Where might the French insurrection of 1968 have gone but for the counterrevolutionary intervention of the Communist Party and the unions it controlled? The weaker the left, the less of a firebreak capital has in the event of insurrection going out of control. *Pace* Revel, Stalinism was the best friend the bourgeoisie ever had.

We have no interest in sterile, Cold War-style debates over whose shit smells worse. We have no interest in being pro- or anti-American. The elites of global techno-industrial civilization can bicker among themselves whether it should be managed by markets, governments, or combinations of the two in whatever ratio. None of that will alter the social megamachine's trajectory toward endless crisis, disaster, and ruin of the earth. It is profoundly unlikely that having the Chernobyl nuclear reactor run by a private corporation or the Deepwater Horizon rig run by a state-owned oil company would have made any difference in the disastrous outcome of their criminal follies.

The real currents of negation and refusal in the modern world evaded Revel's comprehension. In 1992, he had offered his own brief and bemused commentary on "Society of the Spectacle," which Debord included in "This Bad Reputation" among a raft of his clueless critics. **Last Exit to Utopia** has its occasional glimmers of insight, but they lead nowhere. In a Jarryesque moment, Revel quotes the wisdom of General Velasco Alvarado, dictator of Peru from 1968 to 1975: "The revolutionary government of the armed forces is neither capitalist nor communist, but just the opposite" (247). Revel used this quote in order to scorn the concept of Market Socialism in favor of his beloved laissez-faire capitalism. But if you dig into the general's statement deeply enough and come out the other side of it, you might instead discover anarchy. Ⓐ

A Wolf in Faun's Clothing



Willful Disobedience

by Wolfi Landstreicher

Ardent Press, 2009

304 pages, paper. \$15.00

Review by Paul E. Wogg

COLLECTING THE COMPLETE RUN of the zine with the same title along with two independent essays, Ardent Press' recent anthology of **Willful Disobedience** is, if nothing else, a landmark work in its own right, tracing ten years of thought from a theorist whose scope and ambition rivals that of any active anarchist writer. For those of you who are unfamiliar with its author – who once upon a time went by Feral Faun, now writes and speaks under the pseudonym Apio Ludd, and whose *Egoist Encyclopedia* has graced the pages of this magazine – Landstreicher occupies a critical niche that fits squarely within the sizable overlap between the insurrectionary and post-left currents in recent thought. Wolfi adopts a vehement, sometimes frantic approach that would fuse the outraged and fire-spitting with a praxis that is fundamentally ludic, centered around play as a liberated, and thus liberating, form of human (perhaps animal?) action. These writings carefully toe a line between critical theory and circle-a agitprop, with a belligerent style meant above all else to motivate and incite its audience as it sets about the task of theorizing a revolutionary psychology and philosophy of action. Reflecting this focus, Wolfi shies away from hypothetical flights of fancy in order to focus on a meticulous analysis that is at once deconstructive and affirmative.

Centered around a thorough clearing away of the intellectual cobwebs left by fellow wanderers on the would-be path from this world to another, Landstreicher distances this theory of revolutionary desire from those would sacrifice themselves or their integrity in the name of an abstraction, whether democracy, utilitarian pragmatism, or political correctness. In place of traditional leftist modes such as activism, mass consciousness-raising, and crypto-vanguardist cries for organization – each justified through some hoped-for future circumstance – Wolfi enjoins readers to seek insurgent possibilities in the here and now. This requires an exploration of what it would look like for people to take their lives back *as individuals* through open conflict with established regimes of power. On this model, the project of insurrection can never be a matter of pity or obligation, a battle waged in the name of some cause supposedly greater than oneself. Rather, it consists in the rejection of one's own situation, a refusal to bow to established mores wherever they hinder our aims for personal fulfillment.

This corresponds to a movement away from the politics of recognition, in which individuals bring complaints and demands to a community or, more often, an authoritative body charged with regulating interpersonal conflict, in favor of direct engagement with others through the twin modes of affinity

and agonism. In this vein we can see the emergence of an anti-, though hardly a-, moralist orientation, one that, mirroring Nietzsche, holds individual perspective as the only legitimate ethical referent. Instead of detailed (might we say bureaucratic?) delineations of a model anarchist economy, lifestyle, process, etc, Landstreicher provides readers with a *method of attack* by which to make their own investigations in the shared task of mutual liberation. Wolfi follows in the line of Nietzsche and Max Stirner in urging readers to take up these texts only to the extent it is fit for their own projects. This framing points towards an emphasis on flexibility and versatility that is all too lacking among systematizers and positivists of all stripes within the anarchist milieu.

Landstreicher is a writer whose name carries a lot of weight in many North American anarchist circles, especially among those who have entered the scene within the last decade. I personally know many relatively young anarchists who cite the author as one of the fundamental sources for their own (anti-)political identity. Reading this collection makes it easy to see why this is the case: the discourse here is exciting, often profoundly stirring, and the consistency with which Wolfi dissects opponents across the ideological spectrum, while preserving the author's own positive enterprise, gives the body of work here a strong sense of coherence. Wolfi's greatest strength lies in examining our impoverished condition under current regimes of power, decrying our collective acceptance of misery and shame, and the identification here of what is often called the modern condition with the "triumph of survival over life" is especially compelling (17).

While my above comparison of *Willful Disobedience* to agitprop will no doubt be taken by many as something of a low blow, my intention here is to emphasize the necessity of viewing these writings through the lens of

inspiration. It is clear that Landstreicher takes the role of the theorist seriously, and as such obviously intends for the argumentation here to hold water against the slings and arrows of fellow critics (this one included), but these works ultimately define themselves in terms of tenacity, the sheer impact of the words on those previously unexposed to the perspectives contained



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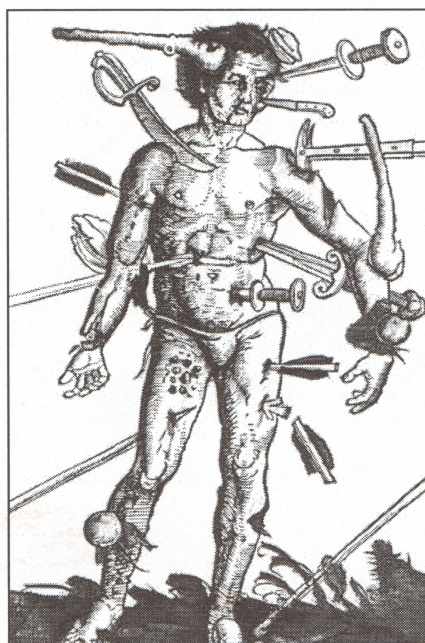
therein. From circumspection around anarchists' frequent attempts to subvert established logics through an embrace of the irrational to an investigation of how our tendency to focus on individual so-called evildoers allows those who judge to distance themselves from their own involvement in structural forms of oppression, there is a wealth of insight here that will challenge readers regardless of ideological persuasion. Across a far-reaching span of subjects, Wolfi introduces a self-reflexive critical apparatus that, while not always taken to completion by its author, provides a worthy starting point for our own inquiries and attempts at rupture with both the established order and those who would serve as the technicians and administrators of its potential successor.

Unfortunately, the same rhetorical zeal that gives *Willful Disobedience* its passionate core also proves an Achilles' heel, the decision to focus on emotional impact all too often coming at the cost of speculative rigor. Though I have already mentioned several references to Nietzsche as a worthwhile, if not authoritative, figure, Wolfi fails in many ways to follow that thinker's investigation of modern nihilism through to its furthest conclusion, resulting in a vision of insurrectionary refusal that cannot help but feel somewhat *shallow*. This is largely a consequence of the extreme brevity of Wolfi's pseudo-aphoristic style: while there is frequently cohesion across multiple articles, especially in the essays, individual topics rarely pass the five-page mark, which sharply limits the complexity of the analysis. Too often, interesting and heavily loaded propositions, reflecting complex histories within and outside of an anarchist context, are brought up, quickly explained, and then promptly moved past. Two good examples are the sparsely articulated notion of *transcending gender* and the character of the *singular individual* around which Wolfi's entire ethico-political universe is centered.

In the case of the latter, it is not until the end of the fourth volume, more than nine-tenths of the way through the anthology, that we find anything resembling a subtle investigation of this category. Even here, we do not find anything resembling a grounding of individualism, but a reminder that any true realization of individual freedom would look nothing like that supposedly guaranteed by the liberal nation-state. This is a failure to elaborate worth highlighting, not only because it bears a specific consequence for the attempt to theorize from this position, but also as it is indicative of a broader retention of pre-critical assumptions and transcendental language in Landstreicher's thought.

With a more or less common-sense understanding of the sovereign individual as a unique being discrete from the social world that surrounds and defines it, Wolfi is able to articulate an image of liberation both personal and social whose beauty lies in its simplicity: merely take the individuals out of the anti-individual world created by those who profit from our herd-like manner, such a position argues, and the world will be a better, happier place. While this figure obviously looks to Stirner's Egoist and Nietzsche's value-generating Master for antecedents, the author isolates these models from their broader and, in the case of the latter, often ambiguous location in their creator's respective canons. Attacking the humanism of political liberals and statist reformers in general, Landstreicher disregards Nietzsche's repudiation of the unified subject seen common to liberalism, Christian morality, and socialism (not to mention Nietzsche's troubling dismissal of anarchism as a mere extension of these projects). What is elsewhere dismissed as a mere fiction of grammar stands here as the keystone for an insurrectionary ethos, a maneuver at least worthy of an accounting-for that never appears.

Unfortunately, this particular notion of singularity seems to me wholly inadequate for a psychology that would truly effect a radical break from current



**Those who are
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institutional forms. How, for example, does this model address the role of socialization in the creation of the unique desires that supposedly define us, the selves with which we learn to identify? Or, to put it differently, how can one come to judge where they end and the world, especially the world they would seek to destroy, begins? Where is the room for internal contradiction here, the sense in which we might speak of the self not in terms of unity or identity but rather a multiplicity of forces, some more or less commanding at times? Wolfi's model does take care to allow for flux and growth, but still it often feels like a crass, even petty take on egoism, one that could easily be seen to encourage a sort of insurgent narcissism, the reification of a monolithic subjectivity whose origin seems tied more to wish-fulfillment than lived experience. Adding to this the repeated articulation of a vaguely fleshed out notion of *communism*, we suddenly find ourselves returning once more to an all-too-familiar riddle, one that, last I checked, had yet to be unraveled by even our finest dialecticians.

There are several interesting consequences to reading the contents of this long-term project as an anthology. On the one hand, viewing the span of writing across a decade allows us to follow Wolfi's significant growth as a writer over time. One need only compare the earlier volumes, which too often charge into bombastic claims with little or no exposition or qualification, to the later compositions, which are consistently more measured and precise in their use of language. This progression is also evident in the case of the long-form essays: while the earlier "Against the Logic of Submission" is, in my experience, the more popular of the two with the proverbial kids, I found it heavy-handed at times and, on the whole, unexciting. "The Network of Domination," on the other hand, finds Wolfi firing on all pistons as he insightfully picks apart

frameworks such as work, technology, religion, and dogmatism that construct not only the world we live in, but so often our attempts to strike against that world. In a sense, Wolfi improves the zine over its course by restricting the scope of its critique. This doesn't translate to reducing the scope of the *field* of criticism, the diversity of objects considered through this speculative lens, but rather a tempering of the grandeur of its claims. Of course, we remain subject throughout the work to Wolfi's dismayingly saccharine penchant for heartwarming, at times Oprah-worthy affirmations of life – as when he extols “the social wealth that exists in other human beings, a wealth that is beyond measure, beyond calculation” – but these are noticeably fewer and farther between as we move forward in time (298).

While highlighting its maturation, reading together a compilation of writings that were originally intended to appear serially simultaneously emphasizes tendencies towards repetitiveness as well as the form of stubborn, insistent conviction identified earlier in the case of its rather coarse egoism. This is especially apparent in the incongruity between the author's compelling approach to personal revolt, a refusal to wait for others in order to take back our lives for ourselves, and the inability to articulate a relevant aim beyond the language of a transcendental rupture. By the twelfth time an article ended by telling me *something! about the destruction! of all! hierarchy! and coercion!*, I began to feel as though I was watching a campaign ad reminding us to think globally and act locally in our battle against capital and the state. Wolfi's refusal of mass politics, while appealing at first glance, becomes unintelligible when he also appears to define its success in terms of all-encompassing social transformation. I recognize that this move is largely a rhetorical one, meant to reflect the necessity of thinking in

terms of a complete rupture with the contemporary arrangement, but without being explicitly recognized as such we are left to wonder not how the means here justify the ends, but how those means could possibly aspire to achieve such ends. This is a rift that, like so many others, does not find articulation anywhere in the text, an omission that brings into question the basic framework upon which Wolfi stakes the project of revolt.

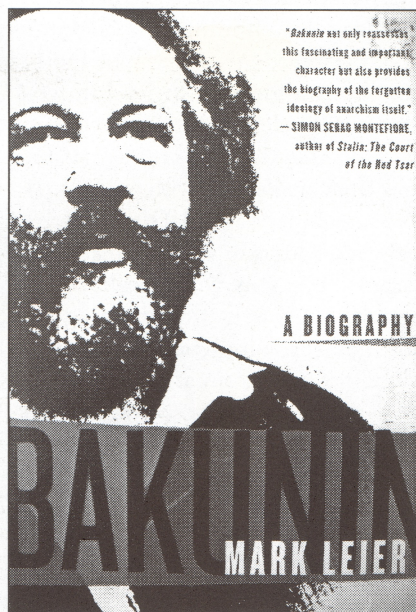
Unfortunately, aside from a cursory one-page introduction by the author and a small scattering of artwork amongst the writing (mostly woodcuts, which match the content rather nicely though their source is unclear), there is nothing in this anthology to frame its contents historically. Its separation into five chronological volumes and two independent essays notwithstanding, readers are left to wonder what the original style of the zine was, both in terms of visual presentation and its own internal textual divisions (into issues, sections, etc.). Of course, some secondary text to contextualize a thinker whose frame of reference is as wide as Wolfi's is always helpful, but my complaint here comes more from the perspective of someone with who never got to read **Willful Disobedience** in its original format. This feels like an attempt to forgo the peripheral in order to focus solely on the author's words, but more transparency in terms of the compilation process would have helped capture a more complete impression of the publication's trajectory.

Although I often find myself frustrated with Wolfi's linguistic imprecision and the general lack of analytic subtlety – and to exactly this extent would distance myself from this vision of insurrection – this is a book I would recommend without reservation for anyone interested in unraveling our past and present conditions with the hope of finding a way out. Those who are new to anarchist modes of thought

or its contemporary insurrectionary strain will find a coherent and insightful (though hardly definitive) articulation, and exploration, of its ethical and practical topography. Those more well-versed in the milieu will likely find themselves alternating between the gratification of finding long-held intuitions expressed in the words of another and the indignation of having well-established beliefs called in to question on terms that we may or may not find ourselves comfortable with.

In the end, **Willful Disobedience** is a work bound to find the readership proper to it; just as Wolfi speaks of writing with the hope of discovering new affinities, those for whom this critique is intended will know at once they have come across a perspective worth allying themselves to. For me, however, this work serves not as a guide to followed, an ethos to be internalized, but as something to be overcome, a stepping-stone on the path to higher forms of analysis with the precision necessary to flesh out – and in doing so transform – what here remains but a sketch. The aims and methods considered by Wolfi in these writings very much align with my own, but seeing them articulated as they are here points not only to gaps in the author's thinking, but my own as well, forcing me to recognize unspoken ideological commitments in the projects I embrace and redouble my efforts to expel all remnants of futility, and of faith, from a life lived in opposition. **A**

An Anarchist and a Socialist Walk Into a Bar...



Bakunin: The Creative Passion – A Biography

by Mark Leier

Seven Stories Press, 2009

374 pages, paper. \$17.95

Review by Lawrence Jarach

THE LARGER-THAN-LIFE FIGURE of Mikhail Bakunin, arguably the most recognized anarchist of all time, has been the subject of bourgeois and Marxist denunciation as well as anarchist celebration for the last hundred years. From scurrilous accusations based primarily on the moralistic prejudices of statist to the gushing accolades and endless quotations of his fans, Bakunin legitimately continues to excite the imaginations of just about anyone who comes across his name. Writing about his reputation alone would take up a large volume, to say nothing of a critical modern reappraisal of his life, ideas, and adventures. Professor Leier, director of the Centre for Labour Studies at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia, is an obvious fan of the Old Man; the admiration and enthusiasm for his subject fairly oozes off the pages of this comprehensive biography. Nevertheless, Leier refuses to follow the fawning footsteps of Anglophone anarchist hagiographers like Sam Dolgoff¹ and G. P. Maximoff.² This favorable biography examines the whole Bakunin, warts and all, while also taking a few well-aimed and well-deserved jabs at other recent, less favorably inclined studies. Leier overlooks nothing that has relevance to Bakunin's public and private life in order to correct the numerous misconceptions, prejudices, and outright lies of various authors.³ Was Bakunin gay? A hermaphrodite? Incapable of real love? A police spy? Impotent? A crazed would-be assassin? A terrorist?

My own relationship with the Old Man is bumpy. The second book I ever read on anarchism⁴ was Maximoff's anthology, and I was amazed at

Bakunin's prescience – especially about what Marxism in power would look like – and his insight into the more general psychology of power. This was good stuff, and I wanted more. But as I learned, read, discussed, and wrote more about 20th century anarchism and revolutionary (anti-) politics, I found less and less in Bakunin that I wanted to cite. I was too busy reading the Situationists, remembering how a couple of my professors had tarted-up Foucauldian post-structuralism, and dabbling with more fringy types of anti-authoritarian thought to feel good about the Old Man's quintessential, if extreme, form of Enlightenment Thought.

This biography was originally published at about the same time that I thought it would be a good time to re-examine Bakunin.⁵ Written by a contemporary self-identified academic anarchist, someone suitably inclined toward the politics while still being a thorough researcher instead of a hero worshiper, **The Creative Passion** made its way toward the top of my to-read stack (which doesn't necessarily mean that I can get to it with any alacrity – in this case it took more than eighteen months from purchase to cracking open the cover). I am happy to say that Leier has succeeded completely in his task of presenting Bakunin as an important person to a modern anarchist and non-anarchist readership. I am not a reborn Bakunin fan by any means (I continue to be skeptical of the allegedly inherent anti-authoritarian qualities of the Enlightenment Project), but Leier has definitely renewed my appreciation for the Old Man. Readers are reminded of why Bakunin was – and over a century after his death deservedly remains – a central figure in the foundation

and development of anarchist theory and philosophy. Combining historical insights with contemporary examples as well as amusingly referencing popular culture, Leier's study is an easy read even if it occasionally bogs down in too many details about Bakunin's private life; penury, romance, and ill health are undoubtedly important influences on how a person behaves and lives, but at times it reminded me of a 19th century novel about the tragically suffering upper classes rather than the biography of a World Historical Figure.

In any case, it's all here: the nasty feud with Marx, culminating in the final split of the First International; the eternal and seemingly irreversible connection between Bakunin and Nechaev, up to and including the Old Man's association with terrorism; Bakunin as liberal Europe's original bogeyman, the embodiment of destructive rage and blind revolutionary violence; the profligacy with (mostly other people's) money; the Jew-baiting. But along with all these exaggerated caricatures and scandals are moments of surprising tenderness, self-doubt, and an acceptance of the damaged nature of humanity (not just men, and not just workers and peasants) struggling in the grips of industrial capitalism.

ONE OF THE CONFLICTS BETWEEN Marx and Bakunin that predated those that affected the International had to do with the role of non-working class people who wanted to champion its emancipation from the exploitation of property owners. Both men were clearly not from working class backgrounds, yet they were accepted as theoreticians (if not leaders) of working class freedom. Part of why they ended up disliking each other so profoundly had to do with their respective class positions and how they each understood their own relation to workers' struggles.

They were also quick to indulge in class prejudices when they fought.

Marx was dismissive of Bakunin's aristocratic roots and Bakunin was sardonic about Marx's bourgeois behavior and hypocrisy. Engels and Marx – especially Marx, Bakunin complained – labelled everyone who disagreed with them “bourgeois,” though the two remained “more bourgeois than anyone in a provincial city.” Worse, their engagement with the Democratic Alliance [sic]⁶ amounted to little more than a “disgusting flirtation” with workers... Stripped of its class prejudice, it reflected a fundamental political difference centered on the role of intellectuals in workers' movements. (134-5)

Further,

[Bakunin] had long argued that workers and peasants had to control the movement for their own liberation. Intellectuals could help, but not lead; they could refine, but not dictate... By placing them in a class of privilege, he underlined the fact that intellectuals had interests that were different from those of workers and could not be assumed to be on the side of the working class. It was an argument he would soon take up again with Marx. (204-5)

A consistent allegation of Marxists, and the ostensible reason for the eventual expulsion of Bakunin and most of the sections influenced by him from the International, was that he was trying to set up a clandestine internal cadre whose purpose was to take over the organization. Most non-hostile historians acknowledge that Bakunin maintained a penchant for trying to replicate the secretive forms of organizing that he found appealing during his time in the Freemasons; they also agree that there was much more bluster than practice in his plans. Leier puts this into a clearer context:

On other occasions, Bakunin would, like the utopian socialists... find some pleasure in designing “ideal societies,” though in his case, these were designs, rituals, and rules for revolutionary organizations... In practice, the revolutionary groups Bakunin belonged to functioned not as secret conspiracies

THE REVIEW COPY OF THIS BOOK WAS accompanied by an interview conducted by our old friend Iain McKay, reprinted from *Black Flag* #229. I bring this up to revisit one of the reasons for McKay's long-standing feud with this journal: we had the bad taste to publish Bob Black's conclusion – backed up with citations – that some anarchists and syndicalists became fascists in Italy. Apparently, if McKay's ideological rivals like Black or this project dare to suggest this, then we are all to be collectively condemned as calumniators, but if a kindred academic makes the same claim *without providing a citation*, it's safe and acceptable to overlook. Here's the relevant passage:

This echoed the argument that he had made in his confession for a powerful leadership cadre that could act for the people when they were unable to act for themselves. In theory, such a leadership could cut through the waffling and compromise of parliaments and directly represent the masses. It was precisely this notion that led many on the left, including some anarchists, to initially endorse Italian fascism in the 1920s, when the failure of representative democracy seemed clear to all. (173)

If I saw it, then a careful reader like McKay surely did. Granted, Leier's statement is not the same as Black's, but one might think that in the interest of something approximating intellectual honesty, McKay would have (perhaps mildly) challenged Leier about that passage, or at least asked him to cite an uncontroversial source. I cannot know that McKay did *not* do so as part of a longer interview process; I only know that publicly, nothing of the sort has appeared. McKay's silence, as they say, is deafening.

but like... present-day affinity groups, with like-minded individuals coming together, sometimes around social activities, sometimes around particular books, to discuss and debate, to plan and to organize political activity. (216)

During an era when the mere mention of "The International" was enough to strike fear into the hearts of just about any bourgeois or aristocrat, such prudence – what some of our friends might refer to as Security Culture – makes perfect sense. That Marx and the others in the authoritarian wing of the International chose to harp on it as proof of Bakunin's anti-democratic spirit nowadays seems childish.

Leier takes a great care discussing Bakunin's ideas on revolution, especially its violent aspects. The precision of the discourse is a refreshing change from the more usual and ideologically charged debates. Bakunin, far from being the terrorist celebrant of violence for its own sake, comes across as someone who understands the inevitability of violent outbursts as part of any authentic anti-hierarchical revolution, but who laments it just the same. Leier explains:

...violence was not the point of revolution... if the oppression of the masses made such a violent reaction inevitable, it was no more rational, moral, or useful than "the ravages caused by a storm." ... no society, not even the revolutionary one, had "the right to judge and condemn," only the right to self-defense... But "the whole secret of the revolution" was not violence against people but the destruction of "property and its inevitable corollary – the state." This distinguished the social revolutionary from the political revolutionaries who did not wish to abolish private property but only to confiscate it in the name of the state... This did not free the people. It simply led to "military dictatorship and a new master. Thus the triumph of the Jacobins or the Blanquists would be the death of the Revolution." (223-4)

A sense of perspective is also useful... Any American president is responsible for thousands of more deaths through

wars foreign and native than all the anarchist assassinations put together... Nor is capital blameless... we may calculate the deaths caused by industrial accidents and unsafe procedures, and those too number in the hundreds of thousands... the fact remains that these deaths, almost entirely preventable, have been whisked out of the category of violence... This sleight of hand... tells us something significant about the power of the state and capital to define violence against them as a crime and violence against the weak as merely unfortunate and unavoidable...

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One might make a lofty argument about all life being equal and that the slaughter of thousands in the workplace and millions in war does not justify the taking of a single life by anarchists... The answer of course is that the state and capital are not opposed to violence as such but only to violence directed at them, and they have the power to define their violence as acceptable, even honorable. (239)

I don't remember if this was one of the aspects of Bakunin's analysis that I found attractive all those years ago when first encountering him as social theorist, but it is certainly worth reminding the various contemporary promoters of the idea that things have to get worse before they get

better – a sort of twelve-step capitalism-as-disease version of revolutionary transformation. Bakunin was enough of a student of human history to be aware of our capacity to endure just about any amount of suffering.

"The most terrible poverty... is not a sufficient guarantee of revolution," he observed. Humanity possessed "an astonishing and, indeed sometimes despairing patience," and immiseration, either in the form of greater poverty or greater repression was as likely to produce "obedience" as rebellion. (238)

Bakunin as Judeophobe is another charge that must be dealt with in any examination of his life and ideas, and Leier, true to form, does not shy away from it. Many of Bakunin's anti-Jewish statements had to do with his perception of Marx as Jew, and their passionate mutual dislike often descended into ad hominem slurs and innuendo. Race-based thinking being so pervasive among 19th century European intellectuals, it's no wonder that the nastiness between them would often touch on the wider Germanic versus Slavic antagonism that characterized Central European nationalist discourse.

But both men had an ample share of the racial ideas and racism of their age, and these escaped from their leaky ists in the heat of polemics with each other. (134)

Jews constituted "a real force in Europe today," for they "reign despotically in commerce and banking." This was a widespread notion in the nineteenth century, shared even by Karl Marx... The debate over whether or to what degree Marx was anti-Semitic continues today, and it is no defense of Bakunin to point out that others too were anti-Semitic. Nor is provocation a defense, though the fact that Bakunin's outbursts were a knee-jerk response to a persistent and malicious campaign of slander may be mitigating. His remarks make up a deplorable but miniscule part of his thought, never becoming a consistent theme in his writing or



turning into generalized attacks on Jews. It is hardly the case, as one historian has asserted, that Bakunin's anti-Semitism was "enough to corrupt his message irredeemably." (276-7)

The quote at the end of this excerpt is from Arthur Mendel's *Michael Bakunin: Roots of Apocalypse*, described by Leier as making "dubious psychological interpretations that stem from his acute distaste for the man and his ideas" (Bibliographical Guide). Mendel is clearly not an anarchist. Moving to the endnotes for that citation we find the following inexplicable passage, almost a non sequitur: "The charge is also made by anarchists today who wish to disassociate themselves from 'classical' anarchism in favor of a new wave, new age anarchism. For a useful critique of this variety of anarchism, see Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (353). It is inexplicable for the simple reason that I know of no "new wave, new age" anarchist – or any other kind for that matter, cited by Bookchin or not – who has dismissed the historical or contemporary relevance of Bakunin based solely on his unfortunate remarks about Jews.⁷ Some anarchist fans of post-structuralism and/or postmodernism have questioned his relevance to 21st century revolutionary thought and practice due to his virtually uncritical acceptance of the entire Enlightenment Project, of Science as a politically neutral and unbiased examination of Nature and a search for some kind of Ultimate Truth (another widespread notion in the 19th century). His anti-Jewish jabs (which, as Leier points out, were not as frequent as those of Marx, who is also not dismissed by most critics because of his own soft spot for the Socialism of Fools) have not figured prominently into any tendency toward indifference or dismissal I'm aware of. And I resent having had to read Bookchin's screed yet again to make sure I didn't miss some reference to Bakunin's antisemitism the first few times I read it back when it was originally published. I didn't miss it; it's not there.

Despite this unwarranted (thankfully relegated to a footnote) plug for what should be the by now completely discredited incoherent anti-anarchist ranting of a failed wannabe Bakunin,



Leier's biography stands as a much-needed riposte to those anarchists who would prefer either to forget, or to remain ignorant of, their own history.

Bakunin's generous humanity is enhanced through Leier's thoughtful examination of his life, the development of his political ideas, and the kinds of relationships he forged with like-minded individuals throughout mid-19th century Europe. We can respect and appreciate the pioneering work of Bakunin without embracing him as a paragon of World Anarchism whose ideas and theories must be accepted and followed if we are to be real anarchists; this study goes a long way toward making that appreciation possible. (A)

Endnotes

1 *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism* (1971) is mentioned in the Bibliographical Guide as having "a useful introduction," but Leier remarks that it suffers from poor translations. In addition, and more importantly, "the pieces are often edited and added to in order to increase their polemical value."

2 *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin* (1953), also mentioned in the Bibliographical Guide, is referred to as "a labour of love" but also "an odd project." I agree. It is a hopelessly disorganized hodgepodge arranged thematically rather than chronologically, perhaps in a futile attempt to show how little Bakunin's ideas changed over time; unfortunately, it is therefore almost useless to any serious researcher. Despite those shortcomings it was still an exciting book to read after Woodcock's abominable introduction (see note 4).

3 The sillier right-wing accusations are thankfully ignored. Nobody disputes that Bakunin was a Freemason for many years, but the wilder claims about him – which derive mostly from fringe conspiracy mongers – characterize him variously or cumulatively as a "close associate" and "good friend" (!) of Marx; the Founder of Nihilism; a high ranking Illuminatus (a "disciple of Weishaupt"); or even a Satanist, intent on destroying not only Christian Civilization, but even God himself!

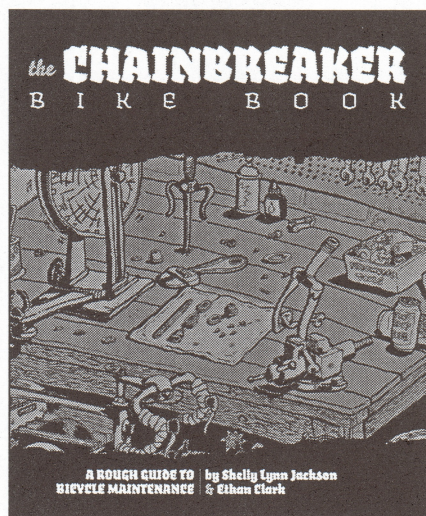
4 The first was the lamentable *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas* by George Woodcock. If I hadn't been naturally curious and interested in knowing more about anarchism, I would have given up after reading it—the book really is that bad.

5 This paperback reprint of the 2006 hardcover suffers from not having any of the photographs from the original. In addition, the new publisher's preference for smaller type and renumbering the introduction throws the pagination off by 15 to 20 pages.

6 Predating the First International, it was actually called the Democratic *Federation* – even on the same page as this excerpt. This is one example of what can only be described as some sloppy editing in the original, which has unfortunately been carried over into this new version.

7 Proudhon, one of the most vocal and consistent Jew-haters among 19th century socialists – and whose animosity was anything but "miniscule" – likewise does not, for the most part, have his anarchist credentials questioned because of his blatantly racist or misogynist attitudes; that challenge is usually a result of Proudhon's poor and partial critique of capitalism.

DIY? LOL!



**The Chainbreaker Bike Book:
A Rough Guide to
Bicycle Maintenance**
by Shelley Lynn Jackson & Ethan Clark
Microcosm Publishing, 2011
256 pages, paper. Sliding Scale, \$12-18

Review by Arlian

CHAINBREAKER IS BROKEN UP INTO two parts. Half of it is a maintenance guide that is also available independently as a stand-alone zine, and the second half is a reprint of the eponymous zines published from 2001-2005. This book is just generic pop-punk-DIY-themed stuff, which is frequently mistaken for anarchistic, though for the life of me I've never understood why. Books like **Chainbreaker** beg the question: what exactly is anarchist publishing? That is, what makes a product or process anarchist or anarchistic? Is it anything written by anyone who self-identifies as an anarchist? What if it's simply on a topic that self-identified-anarchists are interested in? If it's the latter, what exactly qualifies as an anarchist topic of interest? Microcosm seems to define anarchist publishing as a combination of the last two things – that is, anything that is written by a self-identified anarchist and that is of interest to said anarchist. But calling yourself or your project anarchistic isn't enough – just look at those nationalist anarchists. Just because something is empowering or fun or encouraging doesn't mean that it's necessarily anarchist. To be definitively anarchist, something must be overtly anti-statist, not just anti-authoritarian. However, to imply that **Chainbreaker** is even overtly anti-authoritarian is a stretch. Absolutely nothing either of the authors say anywhere in the book differentiates them from any liberal, which is generally true of most books put out by Microcosm. In this particular book, the writers self-identify as anarchists once or twice, but the only

political statements they make are a admonition not to shop at Walmart and a few short stories about sexism in the some bike-shops in the South. Sure, **Chainbreaker** has some cute drawings, but even as a bike book it's useless. It's not detailed or comprehensive enough. Nor is it trying to be – it only covers maintenance. It's basically a really long checklist for your seasonal tune-up and nothing else. It doesn't have a section on troubleshooting or specific repairs, so if there is something wrong with your bike it won't help you figure out what or why. What is the point of owning a mechanical manual with such a limited scope? The zine half is simply a bike-themed perzine with bike-related art. **Chainbreaker** is a totally run-of-the-mill Microcosm book, light on substance but heavy on appearances, which is what Microcosm really sells – a certain kind of user experience. If you wanted a comprehensive bike book, there are several well known, extremely accessible titles already available at a comparable price to **Chainbreaker**. But one doesn't purchase a book like this to learn about bikes, one purchases a book like this because they feel more comfortable with a certain kind of aesthetic which they believe is linked to a certain kind of ideology – or vice versa. A browse through the publisher's catalog will show you dozens of books like **Chainbreaker**: essentially useless introductory DIY books with a slight – and I do mean *slight* – nod to anarchism. Avoid this book, or maybe give it to an enthusiastic 15-year-old fan of *Defiance, Ohio* because that's pretty much Microcosm's target audience. (A)

Just Mouthing the Words



bollettino
ARCHIVIO G. PINELLI
34

**ANARCHISMO
POST-ANARCHISMO
NEO-ANARCHISMO**

Out of Sync:

A highly critical examination of
Bollettino Archivio G. Pinelli #34:
Anarchismo Post-Anarchismo
Neo-Anarchismo
Centro Studi Libertari
via Rovetta 27
20127 Milano
no price listed

Review by *Wolfi Landstreicher*

...and now there is a flood of university professors sticking their nose into anarchist theory... Of course, everyone sees the attempt made by these bourgeois scholars to comprehend the incomprehensible, to adapt their analyses to the "new" facts, to impose their "interpretations" on something that comes from the reality of struggle and that has a lot of difficulty accepting "being interpreted" without reacting.

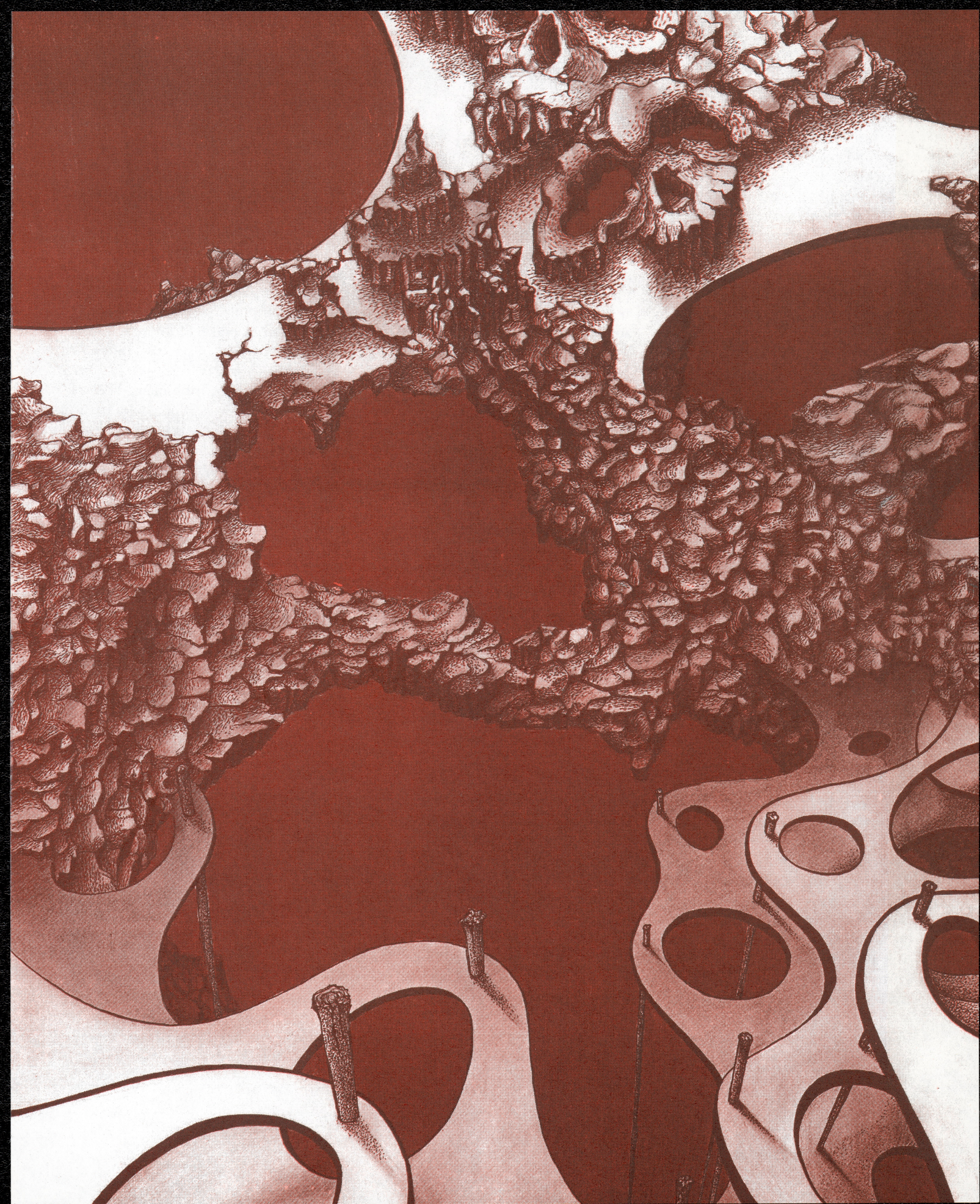
Alfredo M. Bonanno

IT WAS WITH SOME TREPIDATION that I began examining this special edition of the Italian-language bulletin from Archivio G. Pinelli. I am familiar enough with the discourse of post-anarchism to be aware of its recent academic origins and its post-structuralist heritage, and thus to know that I find it distracting and ultimately useless for anarchists. But to see yet another prefixed anarchism suggested by the title really raised my hackles. What could "neo-anarchism" be, if not another recuperative, ideological marketing ploy? I figured I had better begin digging into this bulletin in order to write a critique. The bulletin consists of transcriptions of talks given at two events held in Italy. The first was a seminar on July 4 and 5, 2009 called "Anarchism, Post-Anarchism and Neo-Anarchism in the 21st Century" held in Marghera. The second was a discussion on contemporary anarchism held in Pisa on September 5 of the same year. Among the authors of the pieces in the bulletin are two professors, Salvo Vaccaro (political philosophy at

the University of Palermo) and Tomás Ibáñez (Emeritus, social psychology at the Autonomous University of Barcelona¹), who claim lengthy histories in the anarchist movement (30 and more than 40 years respectively), Vivien García, a schoolteacher from Lyon, France and the author of *L'anarchisme aujourd'hui* (*Anarchism Today*), and Mário Rui Pinto, editor of the anarchist magazine *Utopia* (from Lisbon) who has been active in the Portuguese anarchist movement for 30 years. Two academics and two non-academics, and the difference is like night and day: night is the realm of darkness; you grope around trying to figure out whether there is anything there... day brings clarity; you can see what is there and make decisions about whether you have any use for it.

Warning light: tedium ahead...

PROFESSOR VACCARO INTRODUCES the collection with a piece entitled "*Attenzione, spia accesa*" ("Attention, warning light on"). It is the only piece in the bulletin with a title...and perhaps it was a warning to expect tedium and pretension. I remembered this piece as one of the longest in the bulletin, but in fact it was one of the shortest. Seven tedious pages of academic verbiage explaining why anarchists needed to take into account the so-called critiques of post-structuralist, post-modernist, and post-anarchist academics. In fact, it explained nothing. Vaccaro makes



many claims as to what these academics reveal, but doesn't relate them to anything concrete going on either in the world at large or specifically among anarchists.

In fact, his piece comes across as self-serving. Addressing critics of post-anarchism, he writes: "In short, from my cultural perspective, it makes little sense to impute to supporters of post- or neo-anarchism their 'authorial' condition as non-militant academics..."² And why should we critics ignore the practical history of those inventing these concepts? Because Vaccaro wants to promote an anarchist "nomination" that develops through "critically sifting, gathering, and redeveloping contributions and approaches from non-anarchists, from non-militants, in a way that enlarges the basis of production of an anarchist reading of society and these historical times." But isn't one of the most important tools for critically sifting through such materials the examination of their sources? If they come from academia, it is significant and should raise questions for anyone involved in the daily struggles against the ruling institutions of this world. I tend to be suspicious of what an academic has to say about power unless she is talking about academia itself. This is where his struggle against institutional power would exist and so where she could speak from her own experience of social conflict instead of the realm of separated knowledge and abstractions. Vaccaro is himself an academic, so it is in his personal interest to convince anarchists not to raise too many questions about theory that comes out of academia.

As to his anarchism, from what I was able to gather online, he has been involved with relatively safe anarchist activities – the activities of those whom certain Italian authorities have called "good" anarchists: helping with anarchist archives, promoting theories that defang anarchy (post-structuralist

theories, post-marxist theories, "other-worldist"³ theories, and particularly the theories of the late government functionary,⁴ *gauchiste* professor,⁵ and ultimately supporter of reformism, Michel Foucault), translating Bookchin into Italian (where libertarian municipalism, his city-state concept of anarchism, has more than its share of adherents), and explaining the distinction between "governance" and "government,"⁶ two words which, according to the dictionaries I have at hand, mean the same thing.⁷ He has his credentials, indeed, as a *state* anarchist. So it is no surprise that, in the end, the only reason Vaccaro can give anarchists for taking post-anarchist critiques into account is that anarchists need to be "in sync with the times." I will have more to say on that later.

Daylight: a clear critique of post-anarchism

THE SECOND PIECE IS A transcription of Vivien García's talk delivered in Marghera. The transcription is laced with footnotes that show García is well versed on post-anarchism (he has nothing to say about neo-anarchism). He begins with a detailed, well-documented description of the origins of this tendency. He verifies in detail what I already knew: post-anarchism does not originate from developing anarchist theory and practice. It has its origins in academic philosophy in the US, particularly among professors and graduate students fascinated by what García refers to with gentle sarcasm as "French Theory."⁸ Thus, rather than being an outgrowth of anarchism, he shows it to be an outgrowth of post-structuralism, post-Marxism, and post-modern philosophy. In fact, he shows it to be a purely philosophical and intellectual perspective, unlike the perspectives of the anarchists it claims to critique, which grew out of an ongoing practice of revolt.

García offers a fairly detailed summary of this post-anarchist critique, making particular use of Todd May's *The Political Philosophy of Post-structuralist Anarchism*, Saul Newman's *From Bakunin to Lacan*, and Lewis Call's *Postmodern Anarchism*, with side references to books from post-structuralist and post-Marxist sources used by these authors. He points out that every one of these books is the work of an academic, and shows how this affects their analyses. The critique post-anarchists make of anarchism can be summarized in one sentence: anarchist theory to date is the product of modernism and so is obsolete. The details of their critique, which amount to a post-structuralist academic play of words regarding modernity and post-modernity, spring from this basic assumption.

García concludes with his critique of post-anarchism. He shows that the major works of post-anarchism base their critique of anarchist theory on a very limited selection from the available anarchist literature. The references in their books are to four or five of the best-known 19th and early 20th century anarchist authors and, in more recent times, to Murray Bookchin and Colin Ward (hardly typical of the latest anarchist ideas). And they only refer to a few works of the well-known earlier anarchists. García asks pointedly: "In the field of philosophy, who would take a critical study of Nietzsche seriously if it only used *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and was content with anthologized selections from his other writings?" Even more telling is how post-anarchists treat anarchism. "Anarchism is treated as a political philosophy ... or, to quote Saul Newman, as 'a philosophical system that incorporates theories of power, subjectivity, history, freedom, ethics, and society.'"⁹ Here we see what comes of an academic critique: an active movement of revolt is treated as a purely intellectual endeavor, a set of crystallized ideas.

García continues: "Defending this sort of position, however, doesn't make much sense; it means ignoring that anarchism... has been formed and is formed, as practice, sometimes far from and sometimes even against philosophy. From another side, much of what makes it original is the fact that, unlike marxism, it doesn't depend on a univocal situation, but on multiple and varying positions, on individual authors with their own points of view, often in contradiction with each other and even with themselves." García goes on to point out that because anarchist theory develops hand-in-hand with anarchist practice, it is going to reflect its times. Inevitably, Bakunin, Proudhon, Kropotkin, Stirner, et al, will be affected by modernism. But anarchists are also in revolt against their times, so if some of their ideas express unquestioned acceptance of aspects of modernism, others express a distinct refusal of it. If, rather than limiting themselves to a few writings of a few well-known authors, post-anarchists had actually examined the relevant literature in depth, looking at the sorts of debates that have gone on among anarchists for as long as there have been people calling themselves anarchists, they would notice the level of contention anarchists have always had with the assumptions of modernism. It is interesting that the only 19th century anarchist theorist that post-anarchists credit with seeing beyond modernism is Max Stirner (although it is too bad that they don't seem to understand him at all). He wrote his main work in 1844, a mere four years after Proudhon, the first person known to have called himself an anarchist, wrote *What Is Property?* This makes Stirner's *Der Einzige und Sein Eigentum* one of the earliest works of anarchist theory. Obviously, anarchists have been questioning the assumptions of modernity from the beginning, just not from within the ivory towers of academia.¹⁰

Back into the Darkness: Non-argument, faulty logic, and recuperation

THE NEXT TWO PIECES IN THE bulletin are by Professor Ibáñez. The first of these is a transcription of his talk at the Maghera event. He summarizes his talk in these words: "1) Post-anarchism is right in spite of itself, since it is true that it takes a wrong path in its analysis, but it reaches correct conclusions and its theses are, on the whole, right. 2) The post-anarchist discussion is not important, because in practice anarchism would become post-modern even in the absence of such a discussion." He doesn't have to show

What could "neo-anarchism" be, if not another recuperative, ideological marketing ploy?

that post-anarchism "takes a wrong path," since García has already done so, and he refers repeatedly to García's talk. The professor fails miserably, however, at showing that "post-anarchism is right in spite of itself." He claims that the post-anarchist critique should be empirically verifiable and then refuses to offer any empirical verification beyond the claim that in his youth (the early 1960s) he heard much anarchist rhetoric of an "absolutist" and "essentialist" nature, rhetoric "according to which Anarchism is eternal and inalienable because it corresponds to what is most profound and inalienable in Human Nature." He gives no examples of this. We are

simply supposed to take his word for it, probably because "it's obvious."¹¹ Instead of an empirical verification, he offers what he claims is a rigorously logical argument for the entrenchment of anarchism in modernism (the central point of the post-anarchist critique). What is his rigorous logic? Anarchism is a theoretico-practical movement operating in specific historical times. It is, therefore, inevitably marked by those times. He leaves out one minor point. Anarchism is a theoretico-practical movement of revolt *against* the institutions and *ideas* that dominate the times in which anarchists are active. For this reason, indeed, anarchism is marked by its times, but the marks left on it are not simple and readily definable. They are the marks of a conflict with the times. And for this very reason, a careful and thorough reading of anarchist literature throughout the nearly two hundred years that anarchism has existed as a defined movement/milieu will show that debate over the central themes of modernism has always been present. The fact is that anarchism is not merely a set of ideas, but also a practice of conscious rebellion, and this is what distinguishes it from all academic intellectual endeavors. The marks it bears are not merely the marks of the latest (or an outdated) fashion; they are battle scars. Leaving out this key element, Ibáñez's "rigorous logic" fails.

He does better with his second thesis. Starting from his historical determinist assumption that anarchism must inevitably reflect its time, he is able to show that the post-anarchist discussion is not important. I would argue that since he didn't prove his first point, it would not be important in any case. Since he assumes that 1968 marks the beginning of a transition from the modern to the post-modern era (an assumption that is disputable at best, since post-modernism in this sense is an academic invention of questionable use to anarchist social and historical analysis),

he sees the transition to a post-modern anarchism as an inevitable event in the making, starting from that time. Again he doesn't create a convincing argument, but presumes that this is all obvious to anyone who looks at it.

After laying out the determinist doctrines that he considers so self-evident, he then describes this post-modern anarchism. It is, in fact, "neo-anarchism." He tells us: "To speak of neo-anarchism therefore means to speak of an anarchism that corresponds with the characteristics of the present, but the prefix neo suggests something more, the idea of a transformation with regard to anarchism as it would be presented in its traditional form and, more precisely, a transformation that goes in the direction of novelty or that embodies something new." A lot of empty words, but with one significant clause: "an anarchism that corresponds with the characteristics of the present." Like Vaccaro, Ibáñez wants an anarchism that is "in sync with the times" (he also uses this phrase repeatedly), but for him this is inevitable in the long run.

What does this *neo*-anarchism look like? The rest of his first talk and all of the next tell us. It has two wings: the wing of conscious, self-defined anarchists, and the wing of those in struggle who do not identify as anarchists but who "use libertarian methods" in their struggles. The former can be considered neo-anarchist insofar as they no longer appear to hold to the "absolutist" and "essentialist" ideas that the professor attributes to "classical" anarchism (without ever demonstrating their reality), and if they see the latter movements as worthy of unquestioning solidarity. These last words are my own, but Ibáñez makes it clear that for him being "in sync with the times" means riding on the coattails of history, not taking it into one's own hands. Thus, conscious anarchists need to rid themselves of all "absolutist," "essentialist," and "identity-based"

conceptions of anarchism. Since these are problems that he and other academic specialists in anarchism have invented, reading what fits their agenda into the writings of earlier anarchists, they present nothing *concrete* to debate. And this may explain why Vaccaro and Ibáñez make no real arguments, but rather treat their claims as self-evident.

I would argue that those elements that one may find in certain types of anarchism that might be called "absolutist" or "essentialist" can be divided into two categories. First,

**I tend to be
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there are the elements that simply define what it is: the rejection of the state, the rejection of hierarchy, the rejection of institutional power, etc., without which there would be no meaning to anarchism. Then there are elements that do not originate specifically within anarchism, but in leftism: the belief in Progress,¹² the consequent idea that history has an inherent aim, the tendency to give precedence to collectivities over individuals, faith in abstractions like the masses, the people, the proletariat, the working class, etc., and the idea of anarchism as a political program. These latter elements would be eradicated if anarchists would clearly and pointedly break with the left. Ibáñez is, however, calling for the very opposite.

But what is the other wing of neo-anarchism, these non-anarchist

social movements that uses "libertarian" methods? He tells us that this wing consists of the "other-worldist" movements and the myriad of rights movements of various oppressed groups – in other words the "multitudes" of Negri and Hardt, the "movement of movements." He goes on to say that the essential elements of these movements are, first of all, a distrust of "totalizing discourses" and, secondly, an "identity-basis" for their struggles. I certainly think that it is important to explore these various movements to see where a specifically *anarchist* struggle might be able to interweave with them, if at all. But to describe movements as anarchist when they make appeals to those in power (for rights, more participation, and a place within the current system of domination), and further, make no claims to being anarchist (with whatever prefix), is absurd. Anarchist involvement and solidarity with such movements would have to be critical, since these movements are the latest face of a fragmented left. If much of the left of the past was dominated by parties and labor unions, there nonetheless was always another element that operated along horizontal, decentralized lines. They were called grassroots movements and tended to range from left-liberal to social democratic in their aims, not unlike the "other-worldist" and similar movements of the present.

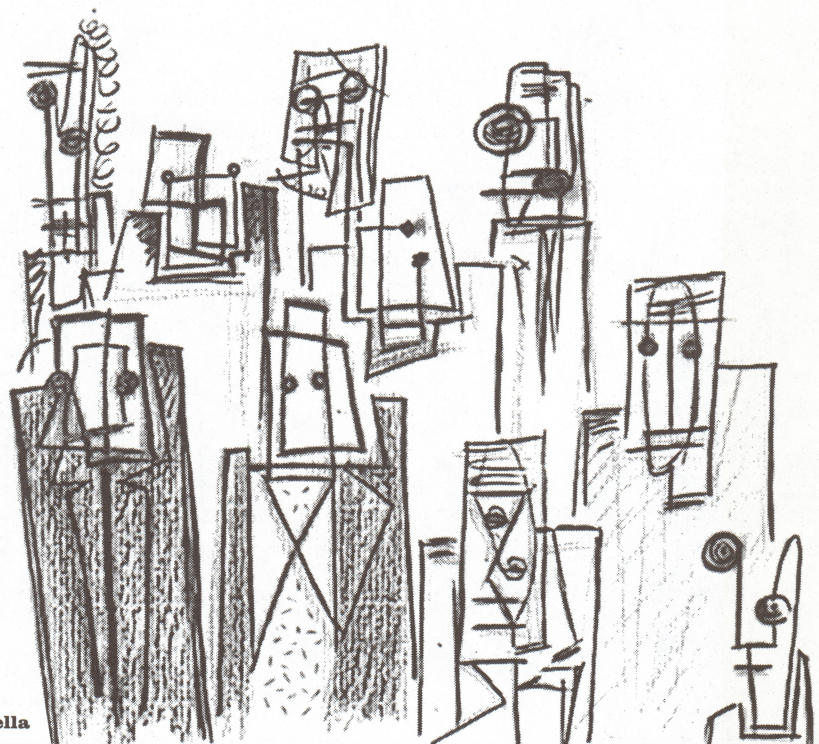
Since I have never heard anyone refer to themselves as a neo-anarchist, I decided to investigate this term. It turns out that even though it refers to active movements outside of academia, the term itself is academic. Simon Critchley, a professor of philosophy,¹³ and Manuel Castells, a professor of sociology,¹⁴ are among those who developed this concept. A brief examination of what I could find online about neo-anarchism confirms that it is usually used in the way Ibáñez uses it.¹⁵ But does the term make any sense outside of academia?

To answer this question, I think it is necessary to examine another one: why would these professors want to call movements that do not consider themselves anarchist at all “neo-anarchist”? Leaving aside the desire of academics to unify and classify phenomena, especially when they are in the process of outlining a new area of specialization for themselves, I can think of a couple of reasons. By making anarchism include a broad variety of movements, activities, and individuals that don’t define themselves as such, one makes the anarchist movement appear much larger and much less marginal than it is. In recent years, I have seen anarchists of all sorts make arguments along these lines.¹⁶ If anarchism encompasses not only those who explicitly call for the destruction of the state, capitalism, all hierarchical and authoritarian social structures, and all institutions of domination and enslavement, but also all of those who create movements that operate on a decentralized, horizontal basis to petition these institutions and social structures for rights and representation, then they aren’t such dangerous people. The dangerous ones are merely an *unrepresentative* minority of trouble-makers and thugs. Neo-anarchism is an anarchism that can work as a loyal opposition *within* the current social structures, “in sync with the times,” as militant petitioners.

I know, we live in times when social amnesia is the norm. Therefore it isn’t too surprising that the theoreticians of neo-anarchism seem to have forgotten that a mere fifty years ago, these decentralized, horizontal movements of citizens in dissent, making demands of the ruling powers, were called (as I mentioned earlier) *grassroots* movements. They have always been reformist in nature and considered a necessary aspect of democratic *state* reality, the guarantee of a plurality of interests operating on the governing process to maintain

the illusions of democracy. This leads to another—perhaps more insidious—reason for creating a connection between conscious anarchism and these movements: if conscious anarchism needs to recognize the whole gamut of movements for rights, democracy, participation, this or that issue, etc. as *de facto* anarchist movements in order to be “in sync with the times,” then it has to defang itself; it has to give up its critical edge *on the practical level*. Thus, this academic theorization of neo-anarchism is blatantly recuperative. Its aim is to transform anarchism from a rebellion against the entire framework of politics and the economy into nothing more than a dissident aspect of the dominant political reality, a safe little pet of the power structure that occasionally has to be disciplined, but may also earn kind caresses if it behaves. In this scenario, the anarchist critique of the state now has to happen in terms of alternative, more inclusive, participatory, and in the words of our supposed comrades “directly democratic” methods of *governance*, not in terms of the refusal to be governed at all.

But let’s look more closely at the traits Ibáñez ascribes to the wing of neo-anarchism that is not consciously anarchist. First, he says that it “distrusts all totalizing discourses.” What exactly does this mean? Although our professor of social psychology isn’t really clear on this, his description indicates that he is talking about any analysis that attempts to understand the current social order as a totality. In other words, those involved in this “movement of movements” look with distrust upon any analysis (or discourse, if you prefer) that seeks to understand the interrelationships of the institutional structures that create the current social order in a coherent way. But without such an analysis, these movements can only remain trapped in the circle of issue-oriented reformism, the struggle for rights, what European radicals call “citizenism.” In contrast, a revolutionary anarchist perspective requires a capacity to understand the ruling social order as a totality in order to bring that critique of the totality into every struggle in which they involve themselves, and that critique takes on



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the form of the refusal of the reformist logic of compromise, the refusal of rights, democracy, and citizenship (what we might call “politics”), and the refusal to make demands of the rulers of this world.

Secondly, Ibáñez tells us that these movements are “identity-based.” It seems that, in his opinion, this is a fine thing for everyone ... except conscious anarchists. Of course, the identity basis of the struggles of the various movements that, in Ibáñez’s theory, make up the broader wing of neo-anarchism guarantees that these struggles remain within a basically reformist, rights-oriented framework, avoiding any “totalizing discourse,” which is to say, any total critique of the present social order. I don’t know any anarchists who would define their own anarchism as “identity-based” (though some definitely include other identity-based perspectives within their version of anarchism), “absolutist,” or “essentialist,” but it is pretty obvious to me how Ibáñez would define this. Those

who see the attack against the state, capitalism, authority, and hierarchy as central to their perspective and practice and who choose their struggles on these terms rather than keeping “in sync with the times” – in other words, those anarchists who insist on being consistently and resolutely anarchist – would be “identity-based” anarchists. And these are the *dangerous* anarchists, the ones who give accommodationists like Ibáñez a bad name.

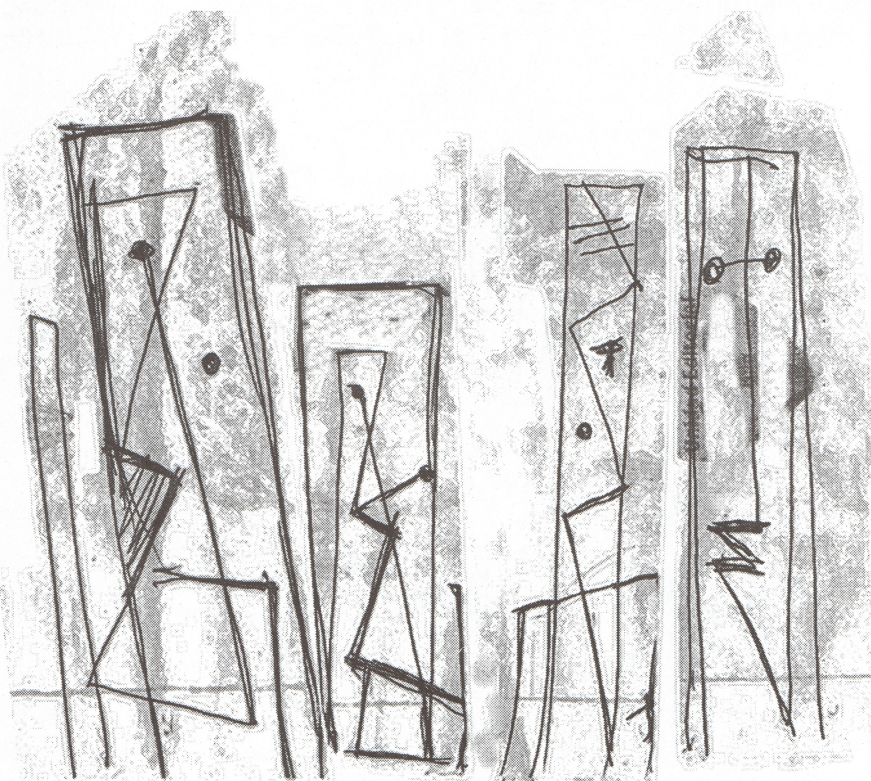
In the quote above, Ibáñez says that the prefix *neo* in neo-anarchism suggests “a transformation that goes in the direction of novelty or that embodies something new.” To summarize, let’s briefly look at what is new and what is transformed. First, there is the novelty of claiming that present-day fragmented, technologized, and globalized versions of grassroots democratic leftist movements and struggles are expressions of anarchism. Then there is the necessary consequence of this that involves redefining anarchism so that it no longer means

resolute rejection of and active rebellion against the state, capitalism, and every institution of domination and exploitation; rather it only means the use of decentralized and horizontal means of organizing the movement.¹⁷ In this way, the conscious anarchist movement gets tamed and becomes a mere auxiliary of the broader neo-anarchist “movement of movements,” which is to say, the contemporary fragmented left. In other words, there is really nothing new here. The left continues to be the left in the only way it can be in these fragmented times.

Leftists and academics who call themselves anarchists continue to try to domesticate anarchism, taking away its critical edge and injecting it with the same fragmented theory and practice that currently permeates the left. And to the extent that anarchists succumb to all this, they lose their own initiative and indeed come to be “in sync with the times,” riding on the coattails of the movement of the fragmented left. The conception of neo-anarchism that professors like Critchley, Castells, and Ibáñez have worked out is precisely a recuperative conception, which, by demanding that anarchism get “in sync with the times,” aims to disarm it.

The Sad Light of Regret...

The last piece in the bulletin is the talk that Mário Rui Pinto gave at the event in Pisa. Pinto is not an academic and, in fact, expresses a certain disdain for academia. He is the publisher of *Utopia*, and his talk (like the contents of his magazine) shows him to be a fairly typical left anarchist of an earlier time. Like García, he speaks in a clear, straightforward manner. In the second sentence of his talk, he says that he is “not at all in agreement with a theory elaborated by non-anarchist American university professors (though that isn’t the real problem), who have constructed



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it without taking into account a broad group of anarchist thinkers who formed the moment of passage toward the 20th century ... and others who, since 1968, have opened anarchism toward the 21st century." And that is all he has to say about post-anarchism.

Further on, he says: "I don't agree with the use of the term neo-anarchism to describe present-day anarchism. For me, anarchism has always been 'neo,' both at the level of practice and at the level of ideas." Instead he goes on to do something neither of the professors did, which is to briefly examine some of the recent realities that have influenced anarchist theory and practice. He looks particularly at globalization and the growth and spread of information technologies and how they have affected the anarchist movement internally and in its relationship with other broadly anti-authoritarian movements. Similar ideas could be found in any recent publication from the anarchist or anti-authoritarian left. What does stand out is his regret for the loss of specific types of practice. In particular, he clearly misses the mass organization and large-scale, well-organized collective activity. He laments the way in which the large-scale collective organization has given way to individual and small affinity group action. Despite his regret and sense of loss, however, he seems to recognize that this latter type of action may be the most fitting path for anarchists in the present situation. Unfortunately, he sees this coalescing through a piecemeal issues-oriented approach to action. In his case, his leftism wins out, so that despite his contempt for post-anarchism and rejection of the term neo-anarchism, he too ends up seeing reformism as the only immediate choice for anarchist practice, with the hope that this may eventually coalesce into a revolutionary movement. Though clear in his language, he is not at all interesting and has nothing of significance to say.

Conclusion: defiantly out of sync

POST-ANARCHISM AND NEO-anarchism are academic inventions.¹⁸ Academia is one of the institutions of power within this society; universities are always run by the state, religious institutions, or factions of the economic ruling class. This does not mean that those in academia cannot rebel against it, but it does mean that anarchists – who desire the destruction of every institution of power – need to critically and ruthlessly examine the theories and ideas that come out of it as part of its normal functioning.

Post-anarchism is not an outgrowth of anarchist theory and practice; it has rather developed within the US university system from the application of post-structuralist and post-marxist methods and analyses to a few anarchist texts, removed completely from their practical context in social conflict. The concept of neo-anarchism has its origins in attempts to use post-structuralist and post-modernist methods to unify (on a theoretical level) myriad movements and struggles in order to create an illusion of cohesion that allows the leftist and reformist recuperation of these movements and struggles.

Vaccaro and Ibáñez make the aim of these theoretical endeavors very clear when they repeatedly speak of the need for anarchists "to be in sync with the times." Post-anarchists claim that anarchists are out of sync because they remain trapped in modernity. Any extensive reading of anarchist literature will show, however, that *from the beginning*, anarchists have debated all of the assumptions of modernity: progress, technology, civilization, science, democracy, human nature, rights, organization, every form of essentialism, the nature of the individual, ideology, etc. And anarchists have always debated and raised questions about these things,

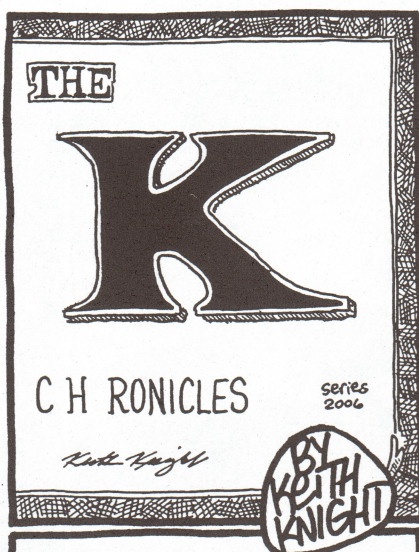
because they *refused to be in sync with the times*. Because they were rebels, consciously in conflict with their times.

There is no doubt that making a total critique of the ruling order is out of fashion. The "totalitarianism of fragmentation" reigns, and with it comes the fragmentation of social struggle and the fragmentation of social analysis. There is no doubt that these days anarchists everywhere are frustrated with the lack of a cohesive anarchist theory and practice. It manifests on many levels. One of them is the interest among anarchists in conceptions like post-anarchism and neo-anarchism. But any theoretical or practical tendency that suggests that anarchists should get "in sync with the times" is a tendency towards *disarming* anarchy, toward making it safe. Instead, I suggest telling the post-anarchists and the theorists of neo-anarchism where they can stuff it, and consciously and defiantly rebelling against these times and the fragmentations they impose. This, too, requires an awareness and an analysis of these times, but anarchists shouldn't be afraid to make the necessary connections to see how and why fragmentation is a *totalitarian* force, a force that the ruling institutions use to coalesce their power over every aspect of our lives, to create a global social totality which each of us needs to oppose with his or her insurgent individuality. We do this when we seek out accomplices with whom to unite the force of our rebellion in the only sort of collectivity that can eradicate all domination and all authority: a collectivity that unites the forces of individuals in order to achieve the interests, desires, and freed activity of each one of them. Such an insurgence will not be in sync with the times, but rather, proudly, defiantly, and mockingly *out of sync*... perhaps enough to put an end to these times... **A**

(See following page for endnotes.)

Endnotes

- 1 Despite the adjective "autonomous," it was "officially created by legislative decree on June 6, 1968" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autonomous_University_of_Barcelona#History).
- 2 All quotes from the pamphlet are my quick translations.
- 3 A literal translation of the current term used in Europe for what we used to call the "anti-globalization" movement, a distinctly reformist tendency.
- 4 And not just in his role as professor. Foucault was a member of the panel of the National School of Administration in the mid-1960s and participated in Gaullist government reforms of the university system in France as a member of a commission in 1967. He was offered the vice-directorship of higher learning in the French Ministry of Education, but a campaign to discredit him for his sexual preferences kept him out of this position.
- 5 He was the head of the philosophy department at the "experimental center" in Vincennes, "a pseudo-avant garde university set up by the Gaullist regime in late 1968 with the professed aim of granting a space to contestation in order to defuse it" (*Machete* #5, "Una casetta dagli attrezzi spuntati" – "A box of dull tools"). He would appoint Maoists and Lacanians (often the same people) to teaching positions in the department. Then when he was no longer in that university, he would criticize its philosophy department for its "hyper-Marxistization," as if he had no responsibility for making it what it was.
- 6 *Governance e governamentalità* by Salvo Vaccaro, <http://www.universita-etica.net/nuke69/gov%20&%20gov.pdf>
- 7 "governance, noun, 1. government; exercise of authority; control. 2. a method or system of government or management." (Dictionary.com Unabridged, based on the *Random House Dictionary*, 2010); "governance, n., 1. The act, process, or power of governing; government: *'Regaining a sense of the state is thus an absolute priority, not only for an effective policy against . . . terrorism, but also for governance itself'* (Moorhead Kennedy). 2. The state of being governed." (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition, 2009).
- 8 Being from France, and having an MA in philosophy, he understands quite well that there is no unified French Theory, but rather a number of contending and conflicting post-structuralist and post-modernist theories that offer no unity of thought.
- 9 *From Bakunin to Lacan*, 37.
- 10 This is true even of the young Hegelian like Stirner. Due to the radical nature of his ideas at the time (particularly his blatant atheism and anti-statism), he had no chance of getting a position within the university.
- 11 Personal response from a supporter of post-anarchist ideas when I asked for some evidence to back up his claims.
- 12 I use the upper case to mean a belief in an inherent universal tendency toward ongoing social and human improvement, an ideology that dominated much radical thinking in the 19th and early 20th century and is still a major dogma of the left.
- 13 Currently teaching at the New School University in New York City.
- 14 Currently at the Annenberg School of Communication, University of Southern California, and also teaching at the Open University of Catalonia.
- 15 The exception being two critiques of "neo-anarchism" found on the Not Bored website (<http://www.notbored.org/neo-anarchists.html>; <http://www.notbored.org/reformist-alternative.html>). In both of these "neo-anarchism" is still a term that the authors are imposing on others, but in these critiques, it refers to those who have consciously considered themselves anarchist since the 1950s.
- 16 For example, CrimethInc's "You May Already Be An Anarchist" from *Fighting for Our Lives: An Anarchist Primer*.
- 17 With the added, unspoken requirement that the aims of the movement be left-oriented, since I doubt highly that Ibáñez and his cohorts would want to include *Turner Diary* decentralist nazis in their neo-anarchist "movement of movements."
- 18 As is *Bollettino Archivio G. Pinelli*, apparently, according to anarchist comrades I correspond with in Italy. They have informed me that anarchists fighting the state in their daily lives and on the streets do not read this bulletin. Only academics – professors and grad students like the people who publish it – read it in Italy. Thus, these comrades informed me that there would be no reason to translate my critique into Italian, since the anarchists there wouldn't know what I was talking about. I had to laugh.



* a LONG Time ago

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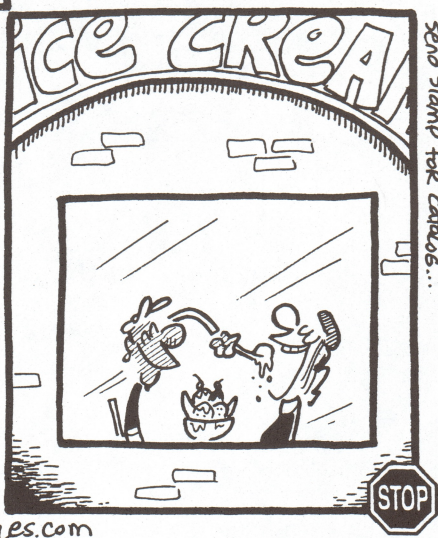
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The Future of Insurrection, Part II: The Power of Insurrection

Section II

by Cupus
Dragonowl

To know that a certain coexistence will end soon, that a decision is near

Any loss of control would be preferable to all the crisis management scenarios they envision

INSURRECTION HAS POWER WHEN ACTS ARE AVAILABLE TO INSURRECTIONISTS which are not available to hierarchical power. The state tries to destroy such advantages, both through recuperation, bringing in approaches which begin outside, and through repressive countermeasures. Insurrections often arise in a cyclical way. The emergence of a new tactic to which the system cannot respond generates new forms of insurrectional power. These new tactics create cracks in the dominant system, which attract other people and groups who were formerly disempowered. The tactics reproduce virally. In contrast, downturns in militant activity occur when existing forms of action seem to have stopped producing powerful effects.

The motor of change is the instability of the existing order's ability to *govern* or *command*. This relies not primarily on its ability to suppress, but on the persistence of obedience. Each insurrection disrupts or destroys the system's ability to command. Each time, the system will either collapse or recompose. So far, it has recomposed. Neither insurrectionists nor statisticians can foresee the other's ability to invent new tactics or weapons. So both new insurrections and new recompositions of the system are unpredictable. A final collapse of the dominant system will occur when the system cannot invent new responses or weapons quickly enough to contain the ability of an insurrection to undermine command. This also leaves open the question of how to reconstruct spaces outside command once the system has collapsed, or while it is collapsing.

Asymmetrical conflict

The police are not invincible in the streets, they simply have the means to organize, train, and continually test new weapons. Our weapons, on the other hand, are always rudimentary, cobbled-together ... [and] don't have a hope of rivaling theirs in firepower, but can be used to hold them at a distance, redirect attention, exert psychological pressure or force passage and gain ground by surprise

THE TACTICS AND TECHNIQUES WHICH form weapons of insurrection and repression, as well as the literal weapons, are constantly innovated on both sides. *The Coming Insurrection* plays up the state's research capacity to generate new weapons. This is, indeed, a serious problem, though the state tends to develop new weapons modelled on old ones, new weapons which do the same things in slightly different ways (is there really a world of difference between microwave beams, LRADs, water cannons, tear gas and shooting in the air?) In contrast, it suggests the improvised weapons of insurrectionists are necessarily inferior, and implies they do not develop. This is not necessarily true. Firstly, activists through time have come up with a whole range of tactics which later catch on, such as the various innovations in lock-ons, tree-sits, and tunnelling in the 1980s. Secondly, there are a great many actors – from

We should look for new vulnerabilities, and tools which exploit such vulnerabilities

smaller state powers to organised crime networks and armed opposition groups – doing research into undermining asymmetrical power. These actors often discover things that are later used in insurrections. Molotov cocktails were invented by the Finns as a cheap way to fight an invading army. The Internet was originally invented by, of all people, the US military, as a defensive measure against massive assault, before being taken up by hacktivists

(consider the Operation Payback actions for instance). Thirdly, age-old knowledge can be rediscovered, as when activists borrow consensus decision making from indigenous groups. We should look for new vulnerabilities, and tools which exploit such vulnerabilities. In China, the next big wave of asymmetrical technologies are already emerging, in forms such as electromagnetic pulse weapons which take out enemy technologies, and cheap micro-satellites which destroy satellite surveillance. In Iraq and elsewhere, insurgents are pioneering the use of mobile phones as triggers, and even making moves into remote-control and robotics. How many of these measures will eventually have insurrectional uses? Already a remote-controlled graffiti machine has been created. We can expect to see the constant innovation of new asymmetrical techniques for as long as domination persists.

Raising costs

TO DEFEAT OR PUSH BACK STATES strategically, it's helpful to understand how they think. This is not easy; they think in a way which is so alien to non-renounced life that it is hard to understand. It helps to think of the state as an instrumental machine: it functions in large part on cost-benefit rationalities. Costs are the Achilles' heel of repression. They ultimately constrain states, because they can interfere with states' abilities to pursue other activities, or the competitiveness of their capitalist tax-base. States want control, but on the cheap; and they will usually choose between tolerance and repression based on which costs more. Actually, their thinking is more complicated than this, for several reasons. Firstly, they'll sometimes bear a large immediate cost (such as the expense of the Battle of Mainzerstrasse) in the hope of future benefits (such as a smaller, more demoralised squatters' movement). Secondly, the cost of the destruction of the system is infinite, and justifies any expenditure. Thirdly, states sometimes seem to react to incalculable costs (such as moral panics) in unpredictable ways.

If done right, imposing costs pushes back statists (and capitalists) a bit at a time, and

they become cornered, disempowered, and reduced to a much less threatening position. Roughly speaking, this works as follows. If the costs are high enough, states can usually be prevented from repression. For the costs to be high enough, they need to be higher than the costs of toleration. The state may or may not choose to invest in *speculative* repression, which aims mainly to alter the future balance of forces. The less disposable income it has, the less likely it is to do this. This is the reason insurrections are usually more effective during economic downturns. The state's reasoning will also be affected by activist responses. The less easy activists are to demoralise, the less beneficial the gamble of speculative repression will seem. Spaces crucial to insurrection can be imposed on states. States will concede a lot rather than risk collapse. Most often, these concessions feed back into recuperation. But they can also be used to carve out autonomous zones. Think of examples like autonomous student spaces in pre-neoliberal Japan, squatting in Germany and Holland throughout the 1980s, the Zapatista zone in Chiapas, de facto self-governed shanty-towns in major cities of the South,¹ or university asylum in Greece. These are not recuperated spaces, but autonomous spaces the state was/is forced to tolerate. We can see this statist reasoning across a number of cases. In the case of the UK animal rights movement, the state did not intervene to save various small operations such as Hillgrove Farm, but was prepared to go to very extreme lengths (from government financial bailouts to bogus trials) to protect HLS² itself, viewed as central to an accumulation strategy based on biotechnology. The German squatters' movement was highly successful in the 1980s, mainly by imposing costs – a squat eviction would be met with militant protests, fierce squat defence, and the formation of new squats. This position was reversed in the early 1990s, and some cities are now squat-free. This is partly due to recuperation (most of the old 1980s squatters were legalised), partly to just-in-time policing (the tactic of attacking squats the moment they're formed is costly, risky, often effective, but vulnerable to just one or two failures rendering it unsustainable; it is

only viable because of the mass legalisations of squats and reduced numbers in the movement). Hence, the state reduced costs of repression, but also took on more costly repression – which can be made sense of in terms of rapidly rising real-estate prices in most of the affected cities.

This allows us to upgrade our sense of our own effectiveness. It must be remembered here that what seem like positive things for the state, such as jailing an activist or fencing in a summit, are actually immensely costly. States regularly spend millions on summits. The Toronto G20 summit reportedly ran up an \$850 million bill. Jail costs \$20,000 per prisoner per year in running costs alone. In London, the successful repression of Mayday 2001 through mass kettling cost £20 million in pre-emptive business closures alone, compared to a £500,000 *total* cost of Mayday

The Toronto G20 summit reportedly ran up an \$850 million bill. In London, the successful repression of Mayday 2001 through mass kettling cost £20 million in pre-emptive business closures

2000, deemed unsuccessful because of property damage. (The state gamble – which ultimately paid off – was that this cost would be worth it if activist demoralisation and fear caused the annual protests to fizzle out.) Protest often imposes costs, even when it seems to be effectively repressed. It should be added that Southern regimes often operate on a different basis, mainly because they rely on forms of repression which are less effective, but lower-cost.

This calculation on the state side can be used to modulate insurrection. Reducing the costs of autonomous activity to a point where they are small enough to be tolerated is not an option, as it increases disempowerment. There are exceptions in terms of selectivity: indirect targeting of smaller firms in campaigning against a major company, and squatting

lower- rather than higher-value buildings, are two examples. Another option is to actively nibble away at a target in cumulative ways, which never cross the threshold where repression becomes cost-effective, but which add up to the collapse of the target. Usually, however, insurrection implies that ordinary action imposes extensive costs, and cutting these costs is impossible without betraying insurrection.

Raising the costs of repression, on the other hand, is viable. For this to be done, each movement needs, so to speak, capacity held in reserve. This can be achieved in two ways. Firstly, it would be helped by being less hyper-active – doing fewer things but doing them better, while staying ready to respond to a crisis. Secondly, it would be enabled by links between movements, such that repression of one band which was already fully stretched produced responses from completely different bands which were not part of the same mobilisation. Hence, effective networking around issues of repression can be a good way of preventing it. Either way, keeping in reserve a capacity to respond to repression is crucial to preventing it. Keeping up a high level of movement composition – strong connections, sustainable emotional forces – contributes to preventing repression. In Manipur, the *Meira*

Paibis provide an example of a reserve force constantly on watch for repression, something like a vastly extended Copwatch scheme, patrolling for hours each day on the lookout for state forces, ready to sound the alarm if abuse occurs. Overcommitting to the moment at the expense of failing to keep forces in reserve to respond to new developments impedes the ability of insurrections to handle repression. Activist bands and affinity-networks need to find ways to distribute activity sustainably through time, avoiding overcommitment and burnout.

Another way to think about insurrection is in relation to the SHAC³ model. This puts a particular inflection on permanent attack: there is still constant action, constant attack, drawing on expressive modalities, but it is varied in intensity and target, to increase its instrumental power. The model is often misunderstood as operating on a human level, as *intimidation*. Primarily it operates at the level of the basic logic of capitalism, which is instrumental and inhuman: it imposes costs. Capitalists make decisions to disinvest because the risk of suffering losses outweighs the profit which can be made. This has proven very effective in pushing HLS to the point where it can no longer function in the capitalist market.



SHAC's vulnerability is that, while it imposes costs on animal abusers, it is open to retaliation by the state, on which it does not, on the whole, impose costs. It can be predicted that people will apply this kind of strategy across a range of issues, and especially, apply it to create the conditions of permanent attack: to prevent the state from repressing, to corrode its repressive capability, to carve out autonomous zones, to retaliate against state atrocities. This would in turn enhance its existing uses too, rendering the likes of SHAC less vulnerable to state repression.

One way to sustain movements in the face of repression is to turn repression itself into a source of anger, and hence of further action. This is shown in certain Southern contexts where killings by police (of activists or of ordinary people) lead almost automatically to responses: police stations attacked, mass protests called, and so on. In Iran during the 1979 Revolution, the tide was maintained because activists' funerals, held after a delay, became a site of renewed resistance, spreading into new demonstrations. In Kashmir today, when police kill, protests always follow. Even in America, police killings and deaths in custody sometimes spark unrest, such as the recent Oakland uprising. Is it possible to duplicate

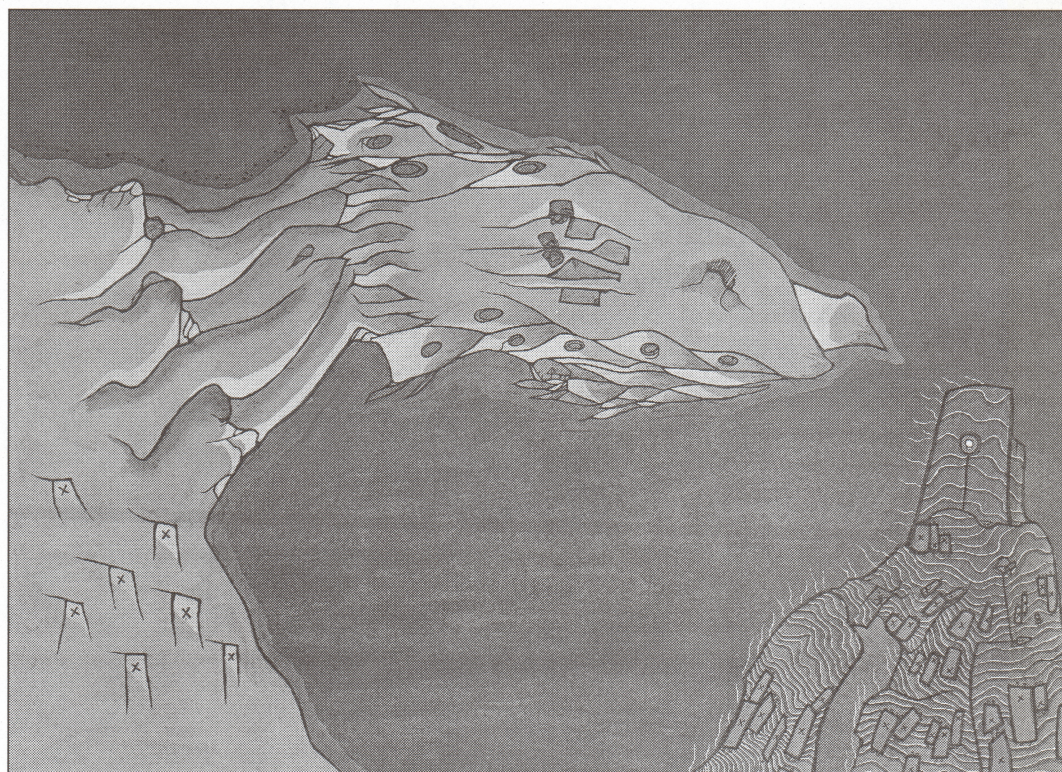
this kind of response in contexts where the violence used is not usually lethal? If it happened, it would probably turn a particular event (such as conviction) or the use of a particular tactic (such as kettling or abuse in custody) into a trigger for protest or for other actions.

Analysing summit protests

THE RESPONSE TO SUMMIT PROTESTS shows the strategic situation clearly. The police effectively lost in Seattle, Prague, and Washington, partly because they were unable to hold space, partly because the images went against them, and partly because real disruption occurred. Police responses have followed a standardised model, and have ranged from the relocation of summits to fortified out-of-town encampments, through the use of pre-emptive arrests, kettling, and attacks on convergence sites, to a general increase in brutality. There are three strategic rationales to this response. Firstly, it aims to disrupt protest in general (not only militant protest), the apparent purpose being to reclaim media space by showing the police on the attack (rather than delegates besieged, or police being routed); the goal is to hegemonise the media

Janky Hellface





Kelly Porter

space. Secondly, it aims to make activists feel powerless, to disrupt devices such as the creation of temporary homespaces at convergence sites and the division of protests into zones to modulate risk, to deploy weapons designed to produce pain and disorientation, and to produce situations of frustration and sheer terror; these measures aim to break morale. Thirdly, the relocation of summits changes little in spatial terms, but reframes a forced outcome as a choice. Previously, it seemed like a defeat that summits occurred under siege, and protesters occupied the surrounding town; now, it seems like a deliberate strategy. This created dilemmas for activists. The previously highly effective swarming tactic had to be abandoned. Morale-boosting symbolic victories became less likely.

This response occurred because the state did not wish to concede the space it had effectively lost with the rise of summit protests; it preferred to try to recapture this space through fascist measures. The state thus gives up many of the deep supports of its existence, the

ideology of legitimacy which disguises social war and keeps up an appearance of civil rights. This is, once more, an effect of just-in-time policing: the state has all its forces on the front-line, and no deep support behind it; it has given up the trenches and fieldworks the maintenance of which would formerly have provided security in the event of a frontline defeat, but which restricted what the state could do on the frontline. This basic vulnerability is often missed in critiques of the effectiveness of such protests today. This said, this strategy creates certain problems. The expected effect of such measures would be to reduce overall numbers of activists, make it less likely that first-time protesters will attend. But it may also increase militancy among protesters, who will become increasingly angry with the repression. This seems to be what has largely happened. The gap which needs to be addressed on our side is that there is an increasing need for other kinds of bridges into everyday life, to bring new people into activism. Protests can no longer be expected to self-recruit.

Hitting the infrastructure of power

Power is no longer concentrated in one point in the world; it is the world itself, its flows and its avenues, its people and its norms, its codes and its technologies ... Anyone who defeats it locally sends a planetary shock wave through its networks

Every network has its weak points, the nodes that must be undone in order to interrupt circulation, to unwind the web

Nowadays sabotaging the social machine with any real effect involves reappropriating and reinventing the ways of interrupting its networks

It's within the malfunction and short-circuits of the system that we find the elements of a response whose logic would be to abolish the problems themselves

All the incivilities of the streets should become methodical and systematic, converging in a diffuse, effective guerrilla war that restores us to our ungovernability, our primordial unruliness

THE IDEA OF TARGETING CRUCIAL NODES of power is not new to insurrectionism. According to Bonanno, because power is exercised through control over physical spaces, it can be attacked in its presence in physical space. A single act of destruction is not the same as bringing down the entire system. But multiplied enough times, it renders parts of the system unworkable. Effective insurrections often take the form of the sustained reproduction of the destruction or blockage of nodes, through time and space. Everything depends on keeping the action going, expanding it, and responding to moves to make it more difficult. There is not a qualitative difference between the small victories, tearing down all the surveillance cameras in an area or making squat eviction impossible, and the eventual destruction of capitalism and the state. The latter is an accumulation of the former, to the point where the system's functioning becomes impossible. Furthermore, if mechanisms necessary for state control or capital accumulation are taken out in this way, the state and/or capitalism would be expelled from the space in question. Social

relations themselves can't be destroyed by sabotage, but they are embedded in infrastructures which can be physically targeted. The power and extent of such infrastructures affects greatly whether autonomous spaces can appear, and the costs of sustaining them make them a weak link.

There is, of course, also the question of building other worlds in liberated spaces. This process is affirmative, not destructive, and may involve quite different *virtues*, quite different forms of social relations from those involved in destroying capitalism. This needs to be done well, because the problems with the system (particularly informal hierarchies, exclusion, and patterns such as racism and sexism) are often reproduced in autonomous spaces. This process *by itself, without insurrection*, will not be enough. Furthermore, since social relations recompose whenever a crisis disrupts the status quo (think of New Orleans, the *Argentinazo*, etc), it seems the insurrectionary part is the more difficult part. In addition, sabotage can help in the reconstruction of other worlds. Sabotage is often highly emotionally empowering. In a Black Bloc statement (see *The Black Bloc Papers*, p. 45-6), it is described as cracking the veneer of legitimacy, exorcising structural violence, turning limited exchange-values into open-ended use-values, changing how we see objects, increasing the "potential uses of an entire cityscape," and breaking spells by making the impossible possible.

The Coming Insurrection makes various contributions to the strategy of sabotage. In particular, it argues for surprise attacks, which it views as central to the *banlieu* revolts: ambushing police patrols, attacking police stations at night and so on. In demonstrations, the equivalent tactic is taken to be bypassing the Red Zone and choosing one's own terrain. "The important thing is not to be better armed but to take the initiative." Another tactic suggested is opening up multiple fronts. "Harassing the police means that by forcing them to be everywhere they can no longer be effective anywhere."

The Coming Insurrection argues that insurrection starts with an unconditional refusal, "a truth that we refuse to give up"

– non-renunciation. This then spreads until there is victory, like the proliferation of the German squatters' movement and the French anti-fascist resistance. To this should be added Bonanno's observation that insurrection requires replicability, not decipherability (*And We Will Still be Ready*, p. 26-7). The means by which an insurrectionary act spreads is not its comprehension by viewers, but the fact that it can be imitated and taken up and expanded by others with insurrectionary intent.

Blocking nodes

Jam everything – this will be the first reflex of all those who rebel against the present order. In a delocalised economy [using] just-in-time production ... to block circulation is to block production as well

The metropolis is one of the most vulnerable human arrangements that has ever existed ... A brutal shutting down of borders ... a sudden interruption of supply lines, organized blockades of the axes of communication – and the whole facade crumbles ... The world would not be moving so fast if it didn't have to constantly outrun its own collapse

On the longshoremen's strike: 'With ten thousand people, the largest economic power in the world can be brought to its knees'

Through the systematic occupation of institutions and obstinate blockading, the high-school students' movement of 2005 and the struggle against the CPE-law reminded us of the ability of large movements to cause trouble and carry out diffuse offensives

TODAY, SYSTEMIC VULNERABILITIES are concentrated in strategic nodes: transport and communications infrastructures (key roads, airports, high-speed rail links, ports, cellphone towers, electricity infrastructure), symbolic sites linked to capital accumulation (eg tourist sites), and distribution depots (eg petrol stations, warehouses). Targeting such sites is a growing trend among movements the world over. It is effective because just-in-time production and reduced

state spending have left the infrastructure increasingly vulnerable, the system increasingly close to the wire: a small shutdown can shut down a massive network dependent on it, and have immense effects, since the system requires constant flows in the absence of stockpiles.

Just-in-time production leaves the system increasingly vulnerable to blockades. *The Coming Insurrection* refers to the Argentine *piqueteros* and the Oaxaca uprising, deemed by statista a disaster on the scale of a hurricane, and an incident in Rennes where only 300 people were needed to shut down the main access road to the town for hours. Examples could be multiplied: the struggles in Bolivia and Ecuador, the Manipur uprising, the costs imposed by blockades of timber sales, the airport and road intersection occupations in Thailand. In the successful Baliapal land grab resistance movement, checkpoints were set up on the four entrance roads to the area, and staffed around the clock. When state forces appeared, conch shells were blown and metal plates beaten to summon protesters to create human roadblocks (Routledge and Simons, p. 488). It might be predicted that blockades will be multiplied, sustained through rolling series of blockades, used as a way to impose costs whenever the system attacks, used to defend and carve out autonomous zones. Indian social movements have pioneered a tactic known as the *bandh*, in which an entire local area is shut down in response to a (usually localised) abuse or grievance, complete with roadblocks, and sometimes stone-throwing. More than the workplace strike, the *bandh* is a strike in the full space of capital, creating autonomy in an area by shutting down what passes as normal life. Something like the *bandh* might be used in areas where local populations are resistant to neoliberalism, to link insurrection to the wider opposition and eat away at state power. There might be a future period, for instance, in which every time American police killed a black person, the nearest city was shut down for a day. One might predict that the number of murders by police would decrease, and that autonomous spaces and feelings of empowerment would increase.

Invisibility

Turning the anonymity to which we've been relegated to our advantage, and through conspiracy, nocturnal or faceless actions, creating an invulnerable position of attack ... To be socially nothing is not a humiliating position ... but is on the contrary the condition for maximum freedom of action

And once we become visible our days will be numbered

THE THEME OF INVISIBILITY HAS A LONG history. James Scott's work focuses on invisible tactics of everyday resistance, some of which not only disguise the actor, but also disguise the fact that resistance has even happened. David Graeber's *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* speculates that there are a huge number of liberated zones around the world, but most of them have stayed liberated by being invisible, and will only be stumbled across by other anarchists. Resistances usually stay invisible because this makes it harder for the state to crack down. It makes it harder to induce moral panics, or to distinguish resistances from passive effects. There are many forms of invisibility. There are the most familiar forms, such as masking-up, late-night sabotage, security culture. There are others which create an appearance of being recuperated – without actually being recuperated. There are still others which make people invisible as part of a large movement, whose members are too numerous to track down individually.

The more militant an action is, the greater the risk that the state will turn its gaze towards it. This can often be warded off to a degree by forms of invisibility which make it difficult for the state to catch activists. Yet once visibility is established, the state may lash out in other directions, looking for a target – an innocent activist to stitch up, a community to collectively punish, a social movement infrastructure to close down as a scapegoat. When doing things which bring about partial visibility, planning should not be limited to avoiding individual detection. Preparation should also be made to impose costs on the state should it engage in repression.

Fraternising and decomposing the state

A massive crowd would be needed to challenge the army, invading its ranks and fraternizing with the soldiers ... It is not impossible to defeat an army politically

CAN AN INSURRECTION WIN BY decomposing the state? Historically, there are cases where statists have gone over to the insurrection, as in Albania and Serbia, and most recently in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. Yet this usually occurs when the state machine is already collapsing, and is a prelude to their hijacking of the revolt. We need to realise that statists, as long as they remain statists, are inculcated into a mentality which precludes the emotional responses necessary to identify with revolt. It is hard for compassionate people to understand the brutality of the state, and realise it is not going to decompose through statists' basic humanity. It happens sometimes with soldiers who are conscripts, or recruits from poor backgrounds (the poverty draft), but it happens rarely with properly induced state agents. In the colonies, the risk of the military identifying with insurgents is managed in a simple way: they don't speak the language. In the case of the police, the same effect is achieved through *cop culture*, and often the very real blocking of communication through helmets and visors. Not to mention that, as for Crisso and Odoteo, this absence of a common language is now true for all of us when faced with the police. Graeber argues that activists find police impossible to understand, mainly because the police's authoritarianism and the situation of conflict provide a barrier to emotional exchange. Berardi argues that the scarcity of attention available today has turned many people into ruthless executors of decisions taken without attention. Virilio argues that today's warriors are so supplemented with artificial vision that they can no longer relate on a human level. Then there's the risk that they'll simply replace human police with robots. If the state ever resorts to sending conscripts or poverty-draftees against insurrectionists, it's asking for trouble. As long as it can rely on police, robots, or *tonton macoutes*,⁴ it can get away with repression.

Rules of engagement

*We live under an occupation,
under police occupation*

RATHER THAN FRATERNISATION, IT is more helpful to think in terms of the transformation of the Rules of Engagement, expanding the scope for insurrectional action while restricting that of the state. In his paper on the phenomenology of giant puppets, David Graeber observes that, in conflicts between police and protesters, each side acts as if playing a game whose rules it had invented entirely by itself. In fact, the field is conflictual, and rules of engagement between opponents sometimes emerge. Aside from normally prohibiting certain kinds of deliberately lethal force, police in many countries of the Global North seem to recognise no limits in their rules of engagement. The reason for this is that police seek a monopoly on defining situations – they do not wish to admit the existence of an adversary.

But it does seem that the rules of engagement can be pushed in either direction. Protesters are more daring in some countries than others. Police violence is more indiscriminate from Genoa onwards than before. In practice, rules of engagement are set in two ways: in indirect effects after the event, and in impact on morale. The police have found ways to dominate certain indirect effects, notably bad press, through psychological operations. This does not leave them immune to other kinds of indirect effects which impose costs on repressive actions. The ups and downs of each side's emotions are more fluid and dynamic. Insurrectional acts exist on a continuum between hope and anxiety: there is always enormous gain, in emotional self-empowerment, but this system tries to balance this with enormous risk. The level of risk varies with the countermeasures taken by the system and its ability to handle the broader context. The state tries to terrorise us because it is afraid. Though it is hard to tell when it is truly afraid, and when it simply simulates fear (to cause moral panics, for example). On the insurrectionist side, in principle Rules of Engagement are

rejected as concessions to power, but in practice activists do hold back in all kinds of ways. The question of altering them to our advantage – by losing our own fears, and by imposing limits on the state – may be crucial during prolonged struggles.

Sustaining Insurrection

A blockade is only as effective as the insurgents' capacity to supply themselves and to communicate ... Acquiring the skills to provide, over time, for one's own basic subsistence implies appropriating the necessary means of production

The state ... instinctively grinds down any solidarities that escape it until nothing remains except citizenship ... [The citizen] can't help envying these so-called "problem" neighbourhoods where there still persists a bit of communal life, a few links between beings, some solidarities not controlled by the state, an informal economy, an organization that is not yet detached from those who organize

Inhabiting a nowhere makes us vulnerable to the slightest jolt in the system

The destruction of the peasant's world ... meant the disappearance of the means for dealing with scarcity

THE LONGEST UPRISINGS IN THE GLOBAL North in recent memory have been the Greek insurrection of 2008 and the French *banlieu* revolt of 2005. Both of these lasted around three weeks. This has, of course, inspired activists used to four-day summit protests or even shorter upheavals, but ultimately, a month is not long enough to bring down the system. In both cases, the state largely sat out the revolt, waiting for it to fizzle out. If the state was genuinely afraid that the revolt could last forever, it could not have responded in this way. Bolivia has experienced a number of peasant shutdowns which have lasted for months. Thailand has seen protest camps which have taken over key intersections in the capital for months on end, eventually repressed by police, only to reappear a month later with similar staying-power. The Manipur uprising

of 2004 was six months long at its peak. Parts of Palestine, such as the village of Bil'in, manage to continue to stage recurring waves of protest. Argentina, Albania, Oaxaca, Ecuador, Kabylia, Kashmir ... the list goes on. In other words, Northern insurrections face a pressing problem of endurance.

One possible reason movements in the South have such temporal resilience is that they are operating out of local economies which are only marginally subsumed in capitalism, and networks of everyday practices which produce a social fabric irreducible to the system: they could persist because they were really autonomous across the board, and could shut down the capitalist economy without destroying themselves. To be able to endure, an insurrection needs an autonomous economy or subsistence-system. This intersects with issues of defeating the commodity system by re-localising *production*, and expands onto broader issues in green anarchism around gift economies and ludic alternatives to work. "Subsistence perspective" writers such as Maria Mies argue that subsistence provides a global alternative to commodity production, recognising the importance of nurturing the forces which actually produce life. *The Coming Insurrection* also refers to the Kabylia uprising of 2001, which effectively pushed the state out of the region. "The movement's strength was in the diffuse complementarity of its components," irreducible to its most formal manifestation: the village assemblies. The communes ranged in this case from the young people fighting police to the producers of resistance symbolism and people sustaining subsistence production, without which the blockades of the commodity economy could not have been so constant and systematic.

Subsistence is also a question of producing types of bands which can be sustained over time. In a paper on precarity, Silvia Federici has argued that "no movement can survive unless it is concerned with the reproduction of its members." Whereas the peak of struggle today tends to be associated with events such as demonstrations, we need to be alert to questions of how to reproduce the movement through time. When communities in struggle

are able to reproduce themselves – as in the indigenous movements of Bolivia and Ecuador – she argues that their anti-system struggles can become more radical. She also argues for a re-examination of the tradition of working-class mutual aid, most notably present prior to the Fordist period. These arguments echo with Hakim Bey's discussions of recreating sociality, autonomist discussions of recomposition, and primitivist discussions of rewilding. What links these fields is the creation of conditions in which insurrection can be sustained through time, which in turn, is necessary in rendering the state superfluous, and hence in

The means by which an insurrectionary act spreads is not its comprehension by viewers, but the fact that it can be imitated and taken up and expanded by others with insurrectionary intent

destroying it. Would a successful insurrection lead beyond the current status of activism as *bund*, to a more ascriptive type of band? This question comes down to the issue of the place of childhood in sustainability through time. Ultimately, it can be hoped that loose bands and overlapping networks can provide a context in which ascription remains redundant.

The issue of subsistence also speaks to broader issues of vulnerability. Subsistence economies operate on an orientation which favours systemic redundancy, and hence resilience, over efficiency. Efficient systems usually produce one thing as cheaply as possible, leaving people vulnerable to shocks if what they produce is no longer in demand or if production is disrupted by economic or natural crises. Subsistence economies spread their activity across a wide range of sectors, so that problems in any one sector aren't as likely to destroy the entire band. Resilience is an alternative to *security* (the control of space to pre-empt the unexpected) in dealing with human vulnerability.

The limit in subsistence capabilities is what is holding back the temporal scope of insurrection in the North. Today's activist bands in the North do not have the degree of autonomy that some Southern movements achieve. Most often, such bands are sustained by marginal employment or state support. This is supplemented by what might be called a "raiding economy," taking items from the system by means such as squatting, skipping, urban foraging, and autoreduction. This should not be viewed as simply an extension of the system. Indigenous groups besieged by state forces similarly rely on a mixture of raiding, marginal production, and benefits. Raiding, marginality, and bottom-up tribute extraction are strategies whereby systemic capture can be prevented or minimised. Yet there is a limit to how far it can sustain a movement which actually poses a threat to the system. A commune, *The Coming Insurrection* rightly observes, can't bank on a raiding economy forever; it needs to increase its self-organisation to meet needs. Ultimately, what prevents recomposition is dispossession: it is easy enough to live without forced work, provided one can seize back enough of what one needs.

Local knowledge

The circulation of knowledge cancels hierarchy; it equalizes by raising up

Freedom isn't the act of shedding our attachments, but the practical capacity to work on them, to move around in their space, to form or dissolve them

THE RECOMPOSITION OF SUBSISTENCE goes hand-in-hand with the recomposition of local knowledge. *The Coming Insurrection* recognises the need to recreate and draw on local knowledges in order to sustain insurrection. "There's a whole set of skills and techniques just waiting to be plundered and ripped from their humanistic, street-culture, or eco-friendly trappings," not to mention "the intuitions, the know-how, and the ingenuity found in slums." Such techniques will have to be deployed both to "repopulate the

metropolitan desert" and to sustain insurrection beyond the early stages, in fields such as food, transport, and communications. At present, our ability to attack the metropolis is compromised by our dependence on its services. Escaping this situation requires a long apprenticeship in a wide range of practical skills. Communes should seek self-sufficiency, and should seek to limit their own size to prevent hierarchies emerging. In effect, what is proposed here is a recomposition of local knowledges, corresponding to a recomposition of bands.

This is excellent, as far as it goes, but it needs to go a few steps further. Band societies and subsistence economies do not begin and end with *practical* knowledge, though they have plenty of it. They also have very different epistemologies and cosmologies from those familiar in metropolitan societies. In practice, this always includes a spiritual element, which if examined closely, turns out to be a way of managing and reproducing emotional states. The question is not only practical but cosmological, because cosmology is necessary to sustain indefinitely the emotional states which produce insurrection. Indigenous cosmology interconnects with local knowledge, providing the frame within which it has meaning, and creating narrative structures which render local knowledge memorable and emotionally resonant. This is a situation where the truth which the band society refuses to renounce is not empty. It is, rather, the truth of a local context in its entirety. Similarly, it is not entirely the case that "[e]verywhere it's the same chilling void, reaching into even the most remote and rustic corners" (*TCI*). There are still places where stones can speak.

Walking through the Witches Market in La Paz – a day after the road barricades were cleared on January of this year – I realized how deep the Western view has been inoculated in my mind ... I realized that my perception of reality has been modified and trained according to one model of interpretation, which standardizes the notion of the world in order to impose on us a set for socialization ... In this world, life is about

something else. If you cannot hear the murmur of stones there is no way you can communicate with this secret world. – Jesus Sepulveda, “Stones Can Speak,” *Green Anarchy* #21

THIS RE-LOCALISATION ALSO CHANGES the nature of knowledge. Local knowledge does not function like global science. Instead of recording a set of facts, it diffuses the power to create knowledge. There is much in the process of insurrection which must necessarily be a matter of situated, local knowledge and which, thus, cannot be expressed in articles or books. Local knowledge has characteristics very different from those in dominant forms of knowledge in the North. Studies of local and indigenous knowledge reveal that it usually involves a very reflexive sense of locality, situatedness, and relationality (ie the fact that knowledges are produced by particular people in particular places, and are relative to their process of construction and the places where they’re produced). Indigenous languages tend to encourage all claims to be situated in the speaker’s social position, and use words which refer to relations instead of things. (And it is quite possible that we will need to create a new language, or at least, inflect our existing language-use in ways which restore these characteristics.) The Andean conception of wealth emphasises wealth in connections, not in things. An emphasis is placed on the practice of *doing* knowledge-production, rather than the outcome. Hence, local knowledge is not a set of facts, but rather, a process of learning and sharing knowledge located in particular ways of life. It is often expressed in practices rather than communicated through media. It usually takes a holistic perspective on knowledge, rejecting the division of the world into spheres or categories, the separation of humanity from nature, and the separation of both of these from the supernatural (whether through the disenchantment of reality or the abstraction of transcendental religion). Local knowledge tends to be expressive rather than instrumental. It tends to prefer inconclusiveness and difference to rapid decision, involving for instance long consultative processes when reaching decisions. It can be argued that local

knowledge is largely a product of a subsistence economy, corresponding to a way of life which is itself situated and relational.

How can local knowledges be recreated? It is not a matter of simply importing content from other local knowledge systems – borrowing DIY skills, indigenous medicinal knowledge, and so on – because this misses the importance of process in local knowledge. Nor is it about copying the rituals of other groups, or playing at being like them, which turns the immanence of local



Kelly Porter

knowledge into a transcendentalism of social roles. The importation of particular knowledge-content and of techniques such as rituals can play a crucial role. Yet is it more important to recreate the generative level of local knowledge, its construction as process in an intensely situated locality. The concepts of local knowledge should not belong to the massified world, but to an intense connection to a local ecology and to those with whom one relates to this local ecology. Other aspects of local knowledge need to be recovered: an intense awareness of relationality (and a corresponding rejection of *unmarked terms* of privilege), and a replacement of instrumental orientations with a cosmology oriented to expression. Both the reifying tendencies of existing language (to focus on things instead of relations), and its pressures towards universalism and generality (towards taking one’s own subjectivity as obvious and meanings as shared), need to be resisted.

Section III Dangers to Insurrection

Strategies of tension

As an attempted solution, the pressure to ensure that nothing happens, together with police surveillance of the territory, will only intensify

THE MOST VISIBLE DANGER TO insurrection is the danger of repression. Its contemporary manifestation as War on Terror follows a model of counterinsurgency shown clearly in Italy in the 1980s: creating a civil war of a type the state could use to destroy the movement under the ideological shadow of a struggle with an invisible enemy. What went wrong in Italy was not that the movement was drawn into conflict, but that sufficient costs were not levied on repression (in contrast, for example, to the pariah status which strategies of tension often bring on regimes in the South). This lack of costs has two dimensions. The first dimension is ideological: the state was able to rely on ideological gestures such as moral panics and media imagery to maintain legitimacy even while cracking down. The second dimension is the failure in the Italian case to find sufficiently effective asymmetrical means for imposing costs on repression. In other circumstances – in Chiapas, the Niger Delta, Bougainville – the strategy of tension has backfired. Research on armed opposition groups shows that repressive counterinsurgency only works with a specific kind of group, whose basis is in any case rather weak. In any other case, repression simply emboldens resistance. What's more, refraining from insurrection is no guarantee that the state will not resort to terror. There are cases where

the existence of more extreme forms of opposition creates the conditions in which states are forced to tolerate less extreme forms. Above all, we need to avoid aiding the state's order not to think. The point of terror is to make resistance unthinkable. Any move which aids this, aids the power of the state.

It can be argued that the global War on Terror is actually an indirect response to the failure of existing mechanisms of domination in the aftermath of Seattle. A strategy of tension has been unleashed which uses moral panics around terrorism and other issues to create a sense of fear which is used as a pretext to close space. This strategy plays to the psychological vulnerabilities, not only of the mass, but of activists too. A part of this dynamic is the state's attempt to *contaminate* activism by ignoring the diversity of tactics and the division of protests into zones, adding in random attacks on less-militant protesters, bystanders, associates of protesters, people with similar ideas... In a more alert context, this could easily be met by vigorous responses. It seems, in fact, that the strategy of tension is revived to deal with each protest wave. It will fail when the fear is insufficient to curb a wave.

Moral panics

The new economy cannot be established without a similar screening of subjects and zones singled out for transformation. The chaos that we constantly hear about will either provide the opportunity for this screening, or for our victory over this odious project

"Terrorist threats," "natural disasters," "virus warnings," "social movements" and "urban violence" are, for society's managers, so many moments of instability where they reinforce their power, by the selection of those who please them and the elimination of those who make things difficult

It's useless to react to the news of the day; instead we should understand each report as a manoeuvre in a hostile field of strategies to be decoded, operations designed to provoke a specific reaction

MORAL PANICS SERVE AS PERHAPS THE most important state weapon today, turning what are otherwise empowering events into sources of anxiety, fear and isolation, eliminating the bad press which repression would otherwise cause, and providing an enabling context for escalating repression. News coverage often functions as counterinsurgency. Police and other state agencies consciously deploy psyops to hegemonise the media field. The media complies, running police reports as fact. But there are also cases where the media targets a movement, particularly a sphere of everyday resistance, and draws the state in. Moral panics function through

the dynamics of what Virilio terms "telepresence": they focus on a single image, taken as iconic, and make the image stand for the event, at the same time turning the glare of attention on it, on condemning it, on catching the perpetrator, and so on. Usually, the image is unrepresentative. Sometimes, it is created or set up deliberately by the state. Always, it is taken out of context, and used to slander entire movements. It is a major reason insurrections sometimes fail to resonate, to be replicated: they are received by potential supporters through a distorting lens.

The function of moral panics *within* anarchist and related movements is weaker than in the wider society, partly because people reduce exposure to, or selectively interpret, mainstream news. But there are still effects. Particularly worrying in this regard was the response of the Greek movement to the Marfin Bank incident which, while tragic, was at worst an accident and quite possibly a state set-up. The effect was to paralyse the movement, destroy the day of action and create a context where the police could storm Exarcheia with little opposition. It also led to recriminations among anarchists, and in particular, other currents turning on insurrectionists, internalising the wider demonisation inside the movement.

Janky Hellface



This is not the only instance. For example, a strike wave in Korea has been defeated because support evaporated after a media scare over a video with a parodic execution of a boss. Tree-spiking went into sharp decline after an accidental death. I suspect 9/11 had a similar effect on activism in America: the less composed layers were drawn into the paralysing effects of mourning, at the expense of the broader context.

Moral panic is not a tactic we can afford to recognise as legitimate. Of course we have our own ethical positions, but these can have nothing in common with systemic moralities. An incident like Marfin can only be viewed in the context of far greater slaughter and suffering resulting from the system's actions, in normal conditions of everyday life. The biggest danger here is in holding back from actions for fear of moral-panic responses. The state

The success of insurrection depends on the prevalence and intensity of diffuse power, counterposed to concentrated power

will not stop with one wave of panic; if the tools are allowed to work, they will be used against every form of resistance until none is left. It is always possible to deduce some risk, however unlikely, which could rule out an action. Derrick Jensen's *As the World Burns* contains a powerful parody of this strategy: an eco-sabotage action which *might*, indeed, *would* have killed children, if only they'd walked two miles from the nearest school and thrown themselves into the burning building. In Germany and in Britain we've seen moral panics about how police "could have been" killed by people throwing stones, or dropping objects off buildings (despite the fact that such acts have been done a million times, without killing police), the roadblocks which "could have" stopped ambulances, the tree-sits which "could have" caused an agent of repression to

fall while removing someone, etc. Giving in to moral panics lets the state close all autonomous space, issue by issue, band by band. Instead we need to build emotional and social barriers among our bands, which prevent moral panics from being internalised either in our psyches or our social groups. We should not try to distance ourselves from others deemed to be truly excluded, whereas we are the "good" protesters. *We are* the excluded, and we reject the boundary between included and excluded, the state's right to select, the division into good and bad subjects.

So, what to do when a moral panic is turned on activists? The current responses fall into two categories: either to persist, to ignore the newfound visibility and carry on as before (which happens with animal rights), or to back off, holding back from action until the hostility dies down (which seems to have happened with tree-spiking). Neither response is very effective. Persistence lets the state get away with persecution, which becomes more likely as activism continues as before. Backing off actually rewards the state for persecution. Yet alternatives seem limited. The third option is to meet escalation with escalation, but opponents may not have the forces in reserve to do this. A frontal confrontation on an issue is difficult, because the state can and will concentrate forces in the aftermath of a moral panic. The possibility remains, however, of sideways forms of retaliation for moral panics, disempowering or costing the state in broader ways. In particular, while it may prove difficult to get around the blockage at the site of repression, the fact of repression can be used as a trigger for actions elsewhere. This requires, among other things, that the affective impact of state terror be offset or transformed.

There are precedents for responses to moral panics, which involve a certain intensity of action being *normalised*, so that the response of moral panic becomes increasingly unavailable or is denied an effect. The German *autonomen* provide, at their peak, the main example: in the early period, moral panic was in full flow, and activists were often given long jail sentences; as the movement grew, it became impossible to

suppress, and moral panic was actually reeled back, with sentences reduced and previously suppressed activities tolerated. A crucial aspect of this movement was that any act of repression, from evicting a squat to jailing activists, was met with militant protests or direct action. A similar effect might be achieved if, for instance, convictions of activists, deaths at protests, or incidents of kettling led to sabotage sometime in the following weeks. If the link was clear, a cost of repression would be established.

The danger of massacre

When things get serious, the army occupies the terrain. Whether ... it engages in combat is less certain ... a bloodbath ... for now is no more than a threat, a bit like the threat of using nuclear weapons

THE ONE REMAINING RULE OF Engagement – that Northern states normally refrain from lethal force – is rather anomalous. It does not seem to prohibit occasional statist murders which can be passed off as situationally justified or as aberrations by individual bad cops (from Carlo Giuliani to Ian Tomlinson to Alexis Grigoropoulos, to the Kent and Jackson State shootings). But it is very noticeable that the state has not so far adopted a policy of large-scale shooting into crowds. This is a historical and geographical exception. Massacre was a normal accompaniment of state repression of insurrection in the nineteenth century and perhaps up to the Second World War – think of the massacres at the Paris Commune, the 1848 insurrection, the 1918-19 German council rising, the Haymarket Anarchists, and various labour disputes in the US. And while massacre is not exactly normal in most of the global South, it certainly happens with disturbing regularity. Sixty people were killed during the El Alto Gas War, to take just one example; think too of Ateal, of Bougainville, of retaliations in West Papua, of the *Argentinazo* of 2001, the Peruvian Amazon protests, events in Kashmir and Palestine, not to mention that twenty years

ago, some regimes (such as Indonesia) used massacre as a matter of course at every minor protest or dispute.⁵

Why is the state holding back? It is impossible to imagine for a moment that it cares about the lives of insurrectionists or about human rights. Most probably, the state has realised that massacre has unwanted effects. Even with the current psyops dominance, a massacre inevitably generates bad press. It produces further waves of protest, as people mark the funerals of the dead and/or turn against the police. It risks the emergence of armed opposition (the long IRA campaign, for instance, was caused by the Bloody Sunday massacre). It shows the world that social war is going on. The allergy to violence, the Victorian attitude to it, is notably absent in much of the global South. The current system is premised on the denial of social war, the denial that an adversary exists. It is also sometimes argued that recourse to massacre defeats the point of power, which is to rule, not to destroy: in showing that the state can crush resistance only by failing to govern, by recognising that the spirit of resistance cannot be defeated, the state effectively admits its own illegitimacy, its basis in violence. On this view, a spirit of resistance can *always* render a state powerless (Routledge and Simons, p. 493-5). Understanding this is crucial, because a successful insurrection, in which so-called less-than-lethal weapons had failed, would push the state to the point where massacre would be considered as an option. The state will only use this option if it believes it will work. The way to make it certain it will not work is to make the state certain that it will not stop the insurrection this way, that it will only inflame it further. The *Argentinazo* and the Gas War were largely successful, in spite of the state turning to such measures. During the Gujjar protests in India, the police were given orders to stop killing protesters, apparently when protesters started responding in kind against police. The state's so-called zero option is not undefeatable. A situation needs to be created in which its activation would be suicide for the state.

The danger of state conspiracy

THE BASIS OF INSURRECTION IS affective and immediate. It is thus dependent on how people feel. People either get angry about something or they don't. People either feel empowered by an act or they don't. Insurrectionists can't conspire to produce effects the way the state can. The state can do things in sneaky, instrumental ways which minimise the risk it faces. For instance, it can realise cumulatively, or under the veil of recuperation, things that would spark revolt as one-off measures.

As a result of its instrumental basis, the state can also conspire to change the Rules of Engagement almost overnight. There is a frequent problem that, just as some issue is about to be won, just as Huntington Life Sciences is about to close or summit protests are successfully holding cities, the state makes a move which can only seem unfair, altering the entire situation in which the conflict occurs. Bush famously boasted that his opponents analysed reality, but, being driven by belief, he could simply change it at will. While his opponents are busy catching up, he'll change it again. It is necessary to be prepared for such moves. At present, they have a highly decomposing effect on activist movements, particularly when repression is ratcheted up (think of the impact of Genoa and its aftermath in Italy, or the effect of the post-9/11 period in America). Being aware of such problems can help avert them, but it is also necessary to keep active on the current terrain, and not hold back out of fear that the state will make such moves. It is hard to come up with answers as to how to respond to this risk, but three possibilities come to mind. First, that a capacity, held in reserve, to respond overwhelmingly to escalation could serve to ward it off. Second, that enabling the state to make other moves of partial retreat can make such options of escalation less attractive. The risk in any such preparations is that they could also enable recuperation. Third, enacting similar alterations of the Rules of Engagement on one's own side can disempower the state's own ability to change the rules. Insurrection needs to stay unpredictable, and innovate constantly.

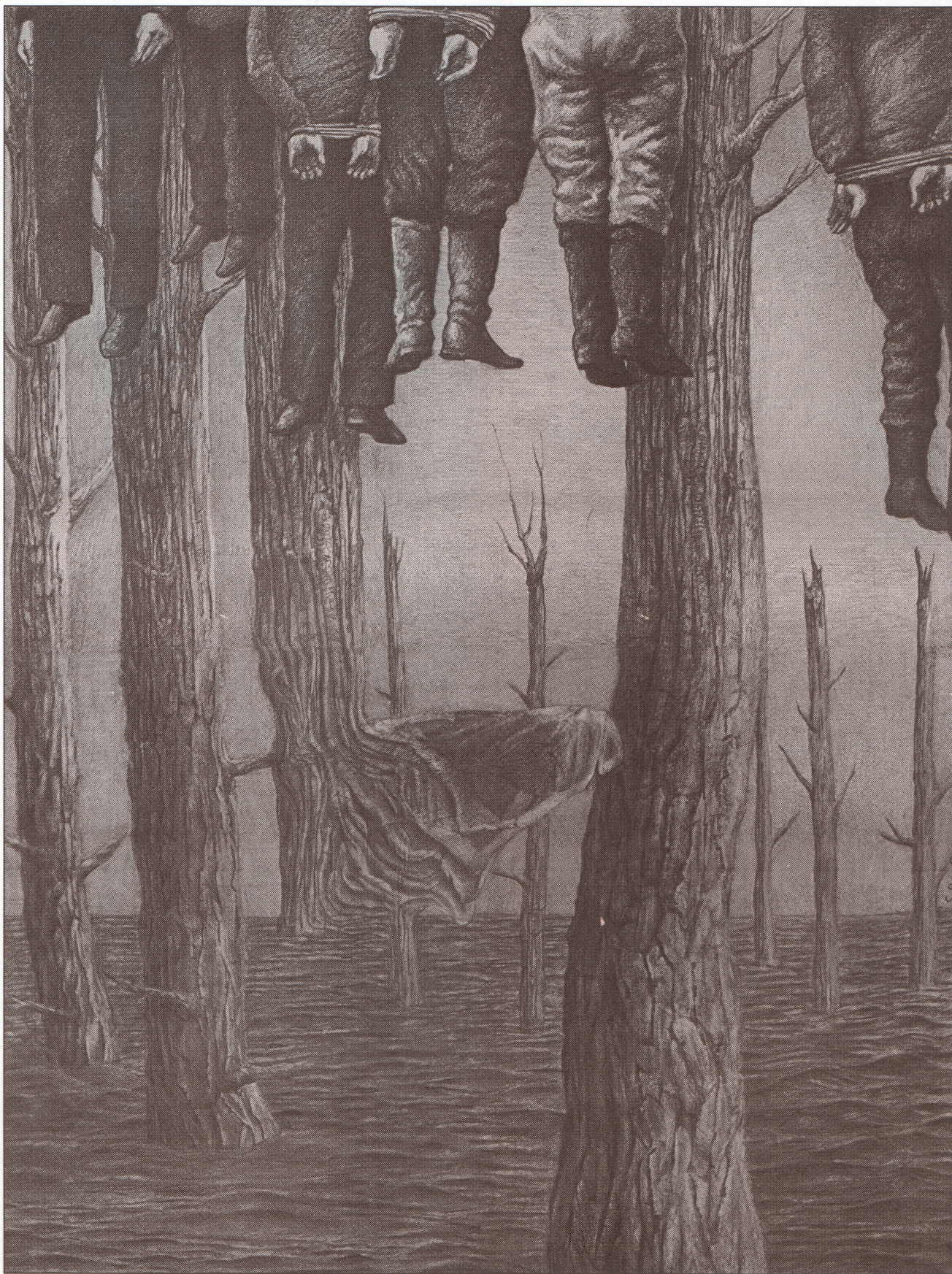
Recuperation

No guaranteed income ... will be able to lay the foundation of a New Deal, a new pact, a new peace. The social feeling has already evaporated too much for that

WHERE REPRESSION FAILS, THERE IS always recuperation as an alternative. It is a quieter, less obvious way of defeating insurrections. Recuperation is an ambiguous response. It often involves real problems being addressed, sometimes even with the same responses which might occur in a liberated context, and with the recognition or tolerance of autonomous spaces. Yet it addresses such problems one by one, in such a way as to keep the system in place and hence to keep generating problems.

Recuperation follows a common pattern. The state will decide, in the event of defeat, to tolerate the costs of autonomy, because they are less than the costs of repression. But it will also try, simultaneously, to alter the future strategic balance by decomposing the basis for resistance, usually by drawing people on the margins to the inside. There is thus a common pattern of the state conceding something (squatters' rights in Germany, Aboriginal autonomy in Australia, a halt to road-building in Britain ...), waiting for the struggle to abate, and then attacking again 20 or 30 years later.

The main threat posed by periods of recuperation is that the networks sustained by resistance fall apart, and the emotional states arising from struggle become harder to sustain. It can be difficult to retain social composition at times when recuperation is at work. There is a tendency for the number of activists to decrease, and for people to be less angry. Previous partial victories, such as the creation of autonomous spaces, then become vulnerable to a backlash after a period of time. Ways need to be found to lock in such victories during periods of downturn in struggle. This could be achieved by deepening resistance in everyday life, or by radicalising the break with dominant ways of seeing.



Sheela Singla & Bernard Dumaine

In place of a conclusion: crisis

What makes the crisis desirable is that in the crisis the environment ceases to be the environment. We are forced to reestablish contact, albeit a potentially fatal one, with what's there, to rediscover the rhythms of reality ... [of] something to inhabit

Reconnecting with such gestures [of defying the state and making do with what's available], buried under years of normalized life, is the only practicable means of not sinking down with the world

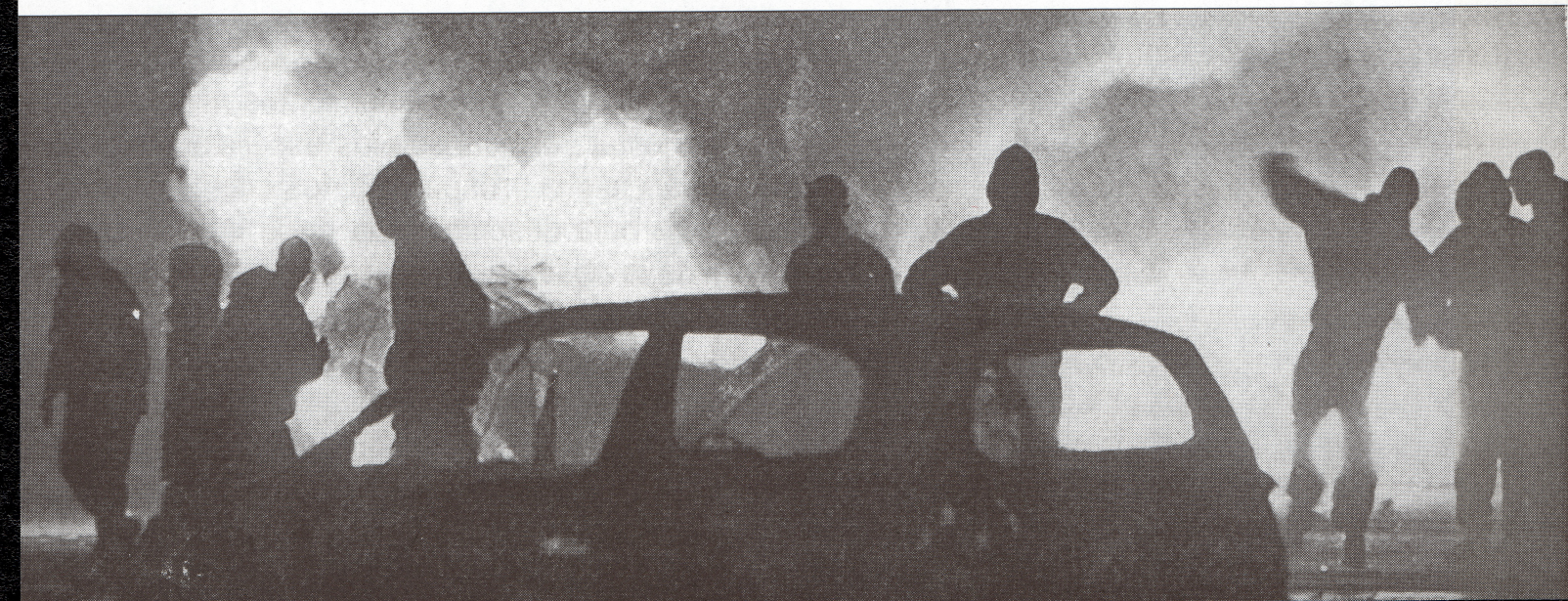
There is a clinically dead civilization ... only decision will rid us of the corpse

CAPITALISM IS IN CRISIS. MAYBE THIS IS one of capitalism's periodic cyclical downturns. Or maybe it is something deeper, a crisis of the dominant system, connected to the ecological crisis, to the end of abundant energy supplies, to ecological exhaustion. The world-systems analyst Sing Chew suggests that civilisations eventually collapse from ecological exhaustion, when they run out of resources to exploit. After the collapse, there follow Dark Ages, which Chew, as a progressivist, tends to fear – but which for us, could be periods of hope. In Dark Ages, diffuse power proliferates, populations disperse from centralised spaces, local knowledge predominates over global knowledge.

Crisis creates opportunities for rebuilding. *The Coming Insurrection* refers to the experience of New Orleans, in which crisis created

a space in which accumulated practical knowledges were deployed. This suggests something important: recomposition is only ever a crisis away. It has to be actively prevented by keeping the lid on the pressure-kettle, by actively decomposing. It reappears the moment a crisis makes the lid come off. They argue that movements are strongest when they take advantage for the opportunities for self-organisation created by moments of suspension of normality – from Islamic parties providing para-state services in marginal zones to left parties exploiting crises. The implication is that gaps created by crises can also be filled by activist bands, recomposing other ways of living.

Hence, we have a range of paths forward for insurrection, a range of possible futures. Certain strategies seem likely to proliferate. In particular, the warding-off of repression is likely to produce new strategies, and subsistence orientations could well re-emerge. Insurrections should be thought of in terms of counterposing a social network based on bands, swarms and affinity to a social system based on hierarchies. It is also a struggle of expressive against instrumental conceptions. The success of insurrection depends on the prevalence and intensity of diffuse power, counterposed to concentrated power. The current crisis provides a potential opportunity to expand spaces of autonomy, but certain fundamental problems would have to be addressed before Northern movements can sustain an insurrection indefinitely. Whether these problems will be addressed remains to be seen. **(A)**



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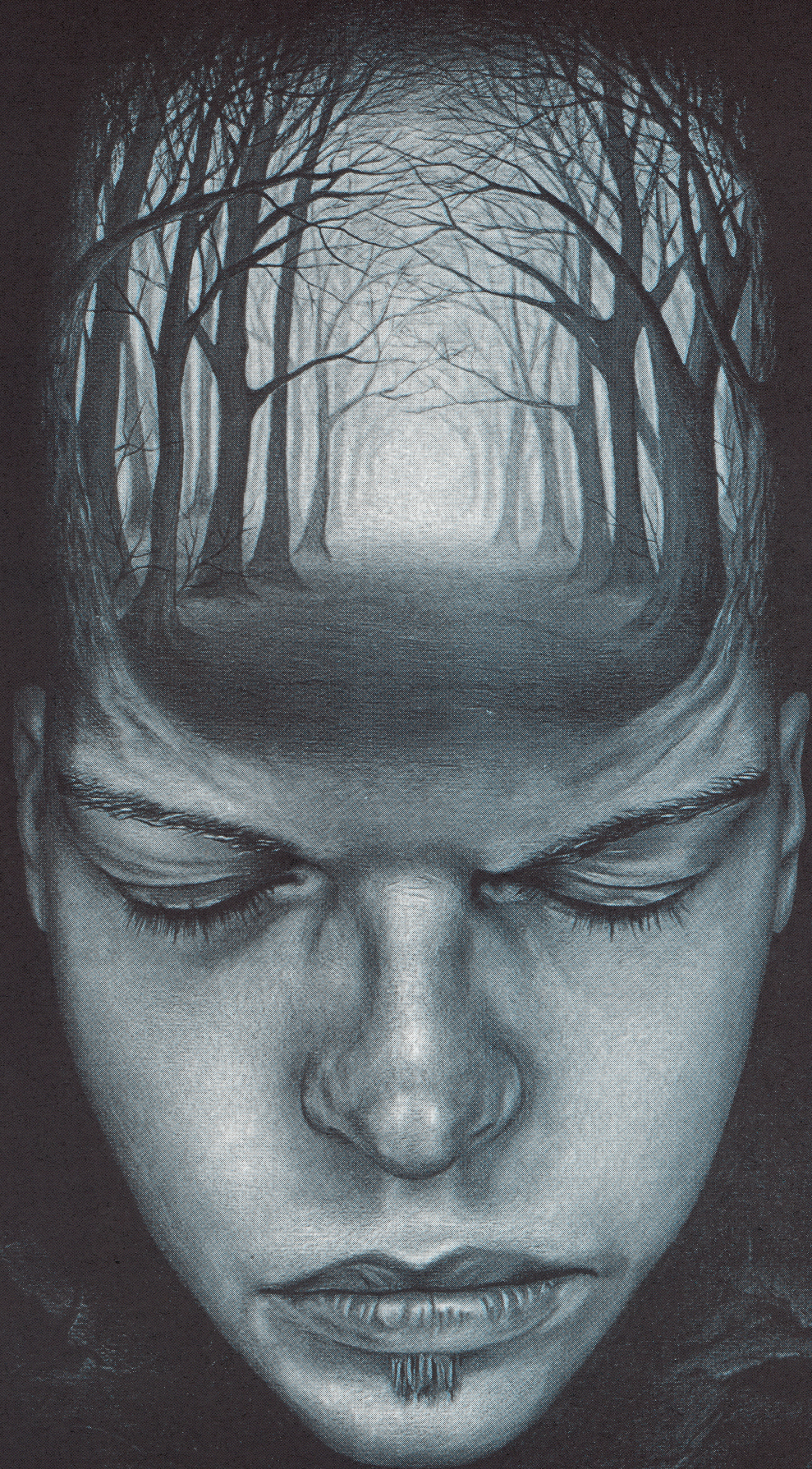
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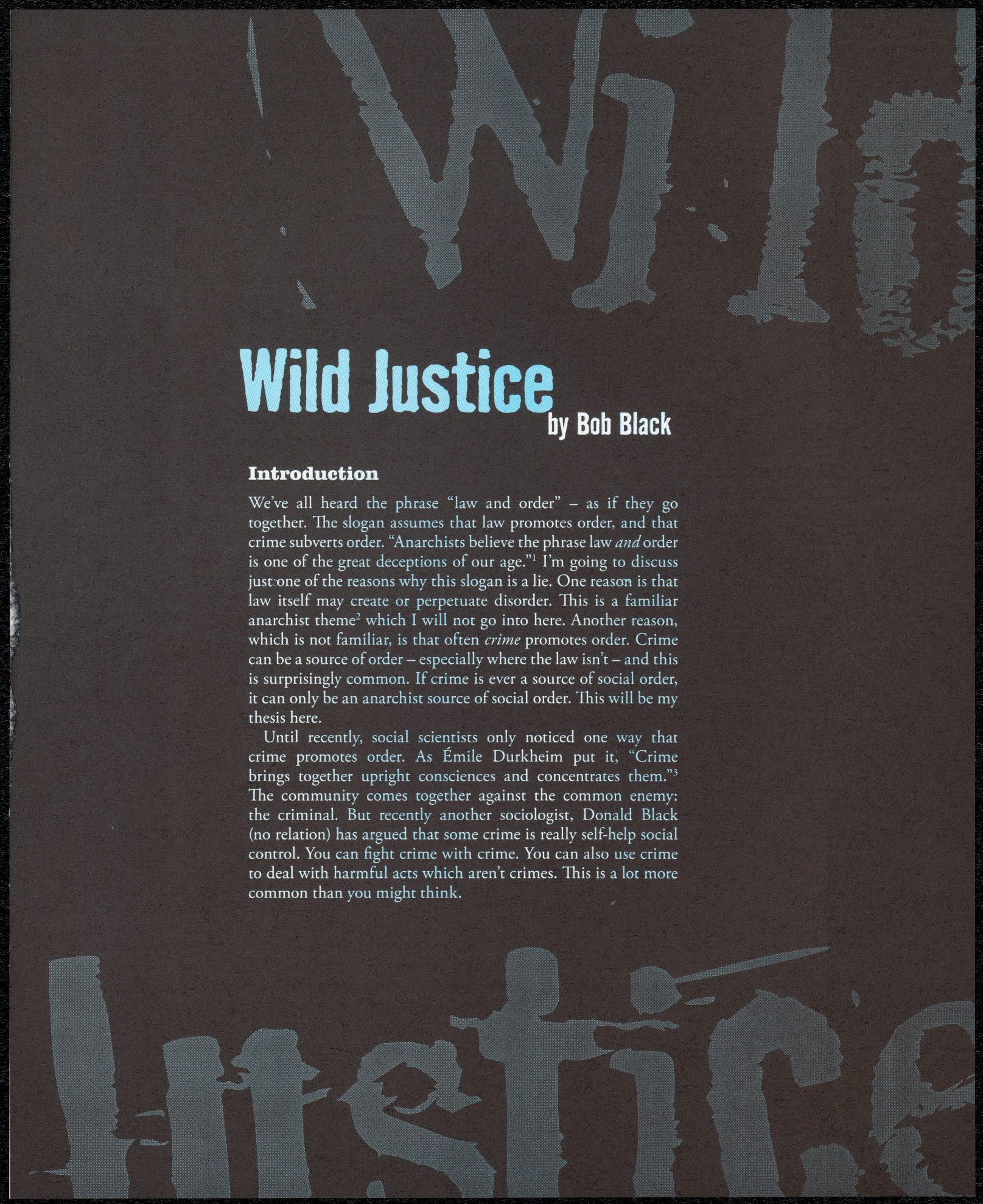
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Endnotes

- 1 The Global South: regions of the world with a subordinate status in the world economy, mostly in Africa, Latin America, and Asia; aka "periphery," "majority world," or "Third World."
- 2 Huntington Life Sciences (HLS): the largest contract testing laboratory in Europe, based in the UK. Specialises in experiments on animals for private companies (not limited to drugs – they 'will test anything for anybody'); widely exposed for torture and abuse of animals. Activists have nearly shut down HLS twice, both times by persuading other corporations not to work with the company. The British government bailed out HLS by providing bank facilities and financial services they do not usually provide to private companies.
- 3 SHAC – Stop Huntington Animal Cruely, the global campaign against HLS: <http://www.shac.net/>
- 4 Hired goons of the Haitian dictatorships, allowed to engage in gangster-like activities in return for enforcing state terror. Generally recruited from among the poor through promises of opportunities for self-enrichment; known for disappearances, torture, and killings.
- 5 We can see the most recent examples from the continuing Arab Spring: almost a thousand dead in Egypt; over 200 in Tunisia, more than 2000 in Syria, over 1000 in Yemen. And they are not finished in the latter two...



Christian Edler



Wild Justice

by Bob Black

Introduction

We've all heard the phrase "law and order" – as if they go together. The slogan assumes that law promotes order, and that crime subverts order. "Anarchists believe the phrase law *and* order is one of the great deceptions of our age."¹ I'm going to discuss just one of the reasons why this slogan is a lie. One reason is that law itself may create or perpetuate disorder. This is a familiar anarchist theme² which I will not go into here. Another reason, which is not familiar, is that often *crime* promotes order. Crime can be a source of order – especially where the law isn't – and this is surprisingly common. If crime is ever a source of social order, it can only be an anarchist source of social order. This will be my thesis here.

Until recently, social scientists only noticed one way that crime promotes order. As Émile Durkheim put it, "Crime brings together upright consciences and concentrates them."³ The community comes together against the common enemy: the criminal. But recently another sociologist, Donald Black (no relation) has argued that some crime is really self-help social control. You can fight crime with crime. You can also use crime to deal with harmful acts which aren't crimes. This is a lot more common than you might think.

The Sources Of Social Order

WE ALREADY LIVE IN A MOSTLY anarchist society, in the sense that the state plays a relatively minor role in controlling antisocial behavior. This is a classic anarchist argument,⁴ but I think that the anarchists haven't made as much of it as they could. Donald Black writes that "the more we study law, indeed, the more we realize how little people actually use it to handle their conflicts..."⁵

It isn't because of the fear of punishment that most people don't kill, or steal, or use heroin, or run red lights. It's usually for other reasons. They may just not go in for those things. They may be influenced or inhibited by education, or by moral values, or by force of habit. Most importantly,⁶ they may be responsive to what other people think of them.

No doubt law imposes some order, for better or for worse. But in addition to social order enforced by law, there's a much larger amount of social order brought about apart from the law. And that includes order brought about *against* the law.

In Max Weber's famous definition, the state "is a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of force* within a given territory."⁷ He did well to place "successfully" in parentheses, and to speak of a mere "claim." No state has ever succeeded in monopolizing the use of force. Few if any states have even tried to. There is some degree of anarchy in every society.⁸

Still less has the state (any state) ever succeeded in monopolizing the "legitimate" use of force either, if this means that those subject to the power of the state, consciously accept its power – not only that they accept it as a brute fact, but that they accept it as right. Usually, all that we have evidence of is that most people, most of the time, acquiesce in, they are resigned to, the power of the state, which is not necessarily the same as endorsing the state or its legitimacy or its justice. Much criminal violence is seen by its perpetrators – reasonably or not – as legitimate social control.⁹ They think that their violence is legitimate, too.

Law And Anarchy

DONALD BLACK'S DEFINITION OF law is simply that law is governmental social control.¹⁰ All other social control is nongovernmental social control and is therefore, by definition, anarchist.¹¹ Black has also formulated some propositions about law, including this one: The more law, the less nonlegal social control, and vice versa.¹² Thus "Crimes of self-help are more likely where law is less available."¹³ When there is no law, and there is only nonlegal social control, that's anarchy. And Black doesn't hesitate to call it that. He is familiar with, and draws upon the historical and ethnographic evidence of viable primitive anarchist societies. And he even anticipates a gradual evolution toward a possible future anarchy – on the other side of modern state society.¹⁴

You might not be comfortable with the term "social control." Black's definition is that it refers to "any process by which people define and respond to deviant behavior."¹⁵ You might not like the word "deviant" either, since you may suspect that you are one. You might say it another way, but Black is only saying that when some people do things that other people don't like, the other people may do something about it, or at least react in some way. That's inevitable. You can abolish law, but you can't abolish consequences. Since society itself is interpersonal interaction when it assumes definite forms,¹⁶ it is implicitly limiting, as an extreme anarchist individualist such as Renzo Novatore seems to have seen, and deplored.¹⁷

Some anarchists, such as Tolstoy, have advocated nonresistance; but none, to my knowledge, has advocated nonreaction. Even going limp is a reaction. Even turning the other cheek is a reaction. They are attempts to shame the victimizers or to win over public opinion: they are power plays. Social control is not necessarily coercion. It may just be influence.¹⁸ Certain people may have to be beaten into polite behavior, but for others, persuading, mocking, shaming, or shunning suffices. There's no reason why an anarchist society can't reduce overall social control as it eliminates legal social control entirely.¹⁹ What's more, nongovernmental social control is less punitive than law. It tends instead to be conciliatory, compensatory, or therapeutic.²⁰

Crime And Prior Relationships

THE POLICE AREN'T ALWAYS INEFFECTUAL. They often catch criminals in such cases as bank robbery, counterfeiting, and threatening the President. But it's possible to identify areas where they are least effective. One of them is where the victim and the criminal have some sort of current or prior relationship.

Most so-called street crime isn't committed by strangers. It's committed by family, friends, and neighbors. The typical rape isn't a woman being dragged by the hair into an alley by some lust-crazed brute. The typical rape is date rape. By now that shouldn't surprise anybody. But some other research findings probably will surprise you.

But before I report them, I want to give you an example to think about. A loans his bicycle to his friend B. B originally meant to return it, but he never did. A finally goes over to B's apartment and, finding the door closed but not locked, walks in. He retrieves his bike. B tries to stop him but A pushes him away. Some people would say that A was justified. Others would say that A had a legitimate grievance but went too far. Few people would consider this to be a highly serious incident.

But to the law, A appears to have committed two major felonies: burglary (because of what is, technically, a break-in at a dwelling) and robbery (because he used force in retaking the bike). It's legally irrelevant that it was A who owned the bike.²¹ And a final point of interest: B committed *no crime* in failing to return the bike. A complaint to the police by A would be futile. From a technical legal viewpoint, B is blameless, as far as the criminal law is concerned, but A could in theory get many years in prison if his claim to own the bike is not believed. He will not, of course, get many years in prison, or any years in prison, whether he is believed or not – and Donald Black will explain why not.

There was a study done once in New York City by the Vera Institute of Justice that tried to find out why so few of the people charged with felonies are ever tried. It's no surprise that many arrests for minor offenses – misdemeanors – do not result in conviction. In one study of lower courts in New Haven, Connecticut, out of 1,600 cases over a period of several months, *no* misdemeanor case went to trial.²² Felonies are supposed to be serious crimes, punishable by imprisonment for more than a year. Yet of over 100,000 felony arrests in New York City during



the period of the Vera Institute study, only 15% resulted in conviction for a felony, and only 5% of those charged were, in fact, ultimately punished by over a year in prison.²³

The most interesting finding of the study, for present purposes, is how many felony arrests involved people in what were there called prior relationships. Some of the statistics are surprising, even startling:

Homicide: 50%
 Rape: 83%
 Felonious Assault: 69%
 Robbery: 36%
 Burglary: 39%
 Grand Larceny (other than Auto): 55%²⁴

This is crucial background for thinking about crime as self-help.

Crime As Self-Help

WHERE THE CRIMINAL AND THE victim know each other, the criminal usually believes that he has a grievance against the victim. According to Black, "Crime often expresses a grievance. This implies that many crimes belong to the same family as gossip, ridicule, vengeance, punishment, and law itself."²⁵ These crimes aren't motivated by greed or by antisocial psychological impulses. These are crimes that arise out of social relationships: "Disputes are social processes imbedded in social relations."²⁶ As Donald Black says, "much crime is moralistic and involves the pursuit of justice."²⁷ In other words, much crime resembles law. This implies that many crimes should be understood to involve interpersonal disputes, not just abstract transgressions of the authority (or transgressions of the abstract authority) of the state. It was a gross understatement for one eminent sociologist to state that crime is "sometimes" a form of conflict.²⁸

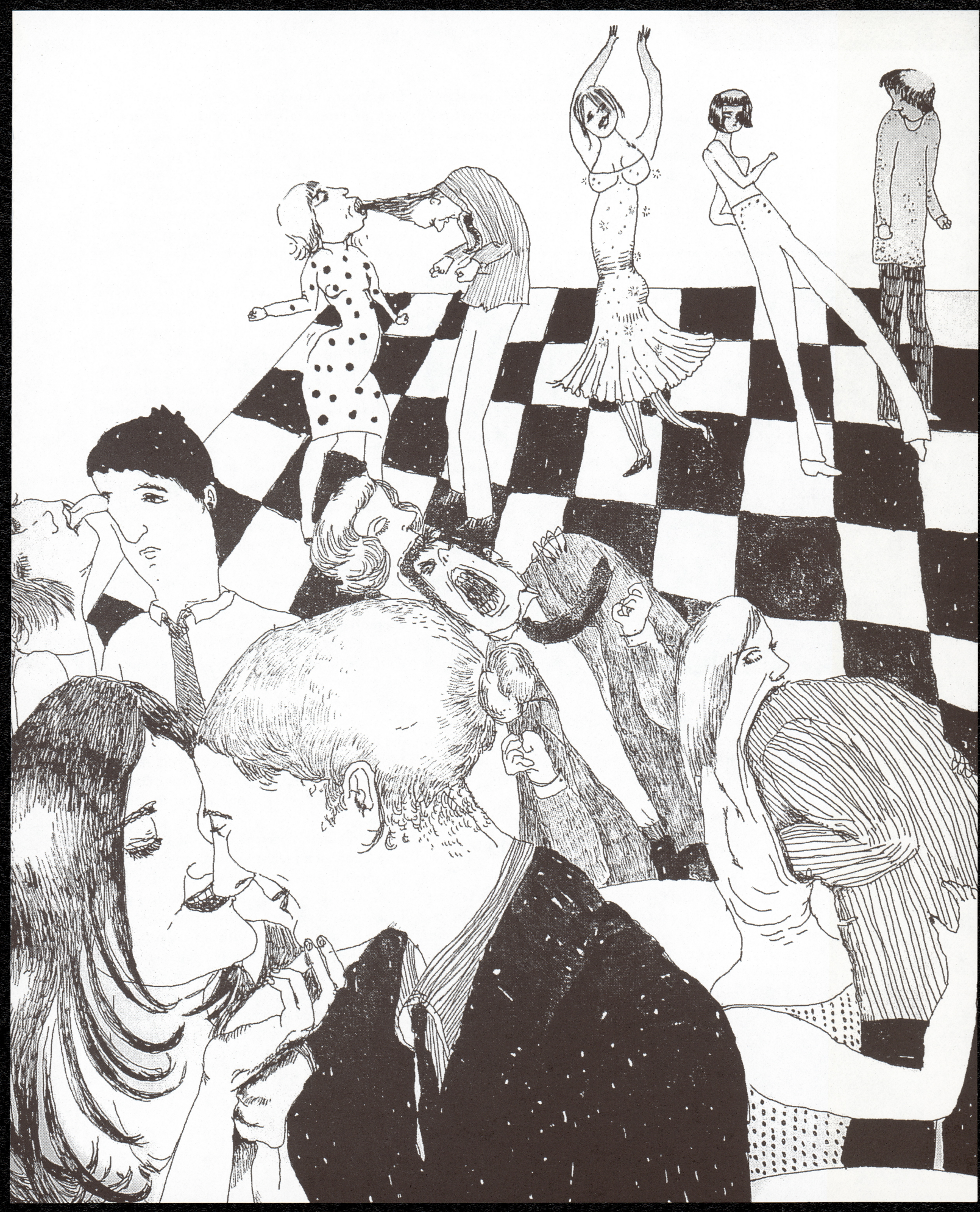
Of course, some crimes don't involve disputes. A hit-man doesn't have a dispute with his target. Bank robbers don't have a dispute with the bank. Counterfeiters don't have a dispute with the Department of the Treasury. Crimes motivated only by hatred, lust or greed – or ideology – aren't disputes.²⁹ This probably explains why the criminal justice system has some success in dealing with some of these crimes, although

even then its performance is less than impressive. But it also explains why the system is much less effective in dealing with crimes which involve disputes between people who know each other. In those cases, although the suspects are easy to identify, very often there are no arrests, or else no charges are filed, or else that's as far as it goes. Thus, a study of the residents of a low-income Boston housing project found that "despite frequent appeals to the criminal courts in disputes within ongoing relationships, the formal legal system fails to resolve most disputes in the sense of providing a mutually acceptable settlement that terminates the dispute."³⁰

There are good reasons why somebody with a grievance might prefer self-help to calling the police. He might not like the police. The police might not like him. He might be a self-reliant kind of person. What he's complaining about might not be a crime, as in the case of A's dispute with B. Or he might be someone the police wouldn't take seriously. There are two major situations in which this might be true.

The first is if it's a prior-relationship crime. The tendency is for state officials to view it as a private matter, unless it's extremely serious, like homicide. And the police know that these cases have a way of going nowhere. They often involve a high level of victim noncooperation. It's not uncommon for the parties to reconcile. Police and prosecutors view some arrests as terminating a problem, not as initiating the adjudication process.³¹ Ironically, these lawmen are thinking about these cases as Donald Black does: sociologically, not legally. If an arrest is made, or the case moves along a little further, to the filing of charges, that might be enough to satisfy the victim,³² which would be unlikely if the offender was a stranger. If a defendant eventually is convicted, he will be treated more leniently than if he were a stranger to the victim.

The second circumstance has to do with the social status of the people involved. If a crime is committed by a low status person against a low status person, Donald Black observes that police are less like to make arrests, prosecutors are less likely to prosecute, and judges are less likely to impose a harsh sentence.³³ The unspoken assumption is, "You know how those people are." Police and prosecutors and judges are higher status people or else identify with them. They take care of their own.



And if the crime is committed by a low status person against another low status person, *and* they have a prior relationship, the likelihood of getting action out of the legal system is lowest of all. If you multiply a fraction by another fraction, the result is an even lower fraction. And this combination is a very common context of



street crime. Somebody with a grievance would not necessarily be acting irrationally if he took the law into his own hands. For all its drawbacks, it might be better than nothing.

Social Control From Below

ONE OF THE REASONS WHY, FOR SOME people, crime is a better way to deal with grievances than law, is that law is much more available to some kinds of people than others. Self-help is more often resorted to where law is less available.³⁴ Lower class people of all sorts enjoy less legal protection: "To the police and other authorities, the problems of these people seem less severe, their injuries less severe, their honor less important."³⁵ High status people use the law more than low status people, and especially use it against low status people.

Organizations use the law more than individuals, and especially use it against individuals, and usually successfully.³⁶ Organizations and high status individuals both use the law more successfully than anyone. A high status organization like the state gets the very best results out of the law,³⁷ which is not too surprising – not only is the state high status *and* an organization, the state also invents the law, and the institutions that enforce the law.

There are various methods by which social inferiors try to influence – to control – their social superiors. Some of their methods involve committing crimes. Rebellions and revolts are such well-known examples that I won't discuss them now. There are two methods, more individualized, which may involve criminal retaliation.

The most important is covert retaliation. This often involves the theft or destruction of the superior's property.³⁸ The intent might be retributive and retaliatory, or to get compensation, or both. This is very common in the workplace. Take theft – pun intended. In embezzlement cases, for instance, the motivation isn't always greed; it may be a grievance against the boss or the company.³⁹ Workers also expropriate the expropriators in other ways, by work slowdowns, absenteeism, making personal use of company computers and phone lines, pilfering supplies, etc. Except for actually stealing company property, these methods may sometimes be illegal but they are usually not criminal. At worst, you get fired, not arrested. But these time-honored forms of class struggle are self-help – direct action – and they only differ from criminal self-help in that they're not subject to criminal prosecution.

I had an employer, the Michigan Court of Appeals, which I felt was oppressing and insulting me. All the other research attorneys felt the same way. So I made a large number of costly long distance calls to my best friend, who was living in Sweden at the time. I was suspected – when something dissident happens, I'm *always* suspected. But even appellate court judges who are, perforce, experts in criminal law couldn't think of a crime to accuse me of. The clerk for one of the judges told me that he saw on the judge's desk an application for a warrant for my arrest. But one space was left blank: the space for the offense.

The other method is noncooperation. Tactics like slowdowns and absenteeism aren't usually crimes. Neither is a rent strike. Willful refusal to pay taxes, though, is a crime. Draft refusal, when there was a military draft, was a serious crime. Refusal to register for the draft, for men aged 18-26, is still a crime, although draft registration as a measure of military preparedness is laughable. It is more a matter of instilling obedience for its own sake. I expect there are other examples. Anybody who is in a position, by covert retaliation or by just withholding cooperation, to strike back – without committing a crime – need not go out of her way to retaliate by committing a crime. Unless she wants to. Crime can be a transgressive thrill. It can make you feel better about yourself.

Vengeance

YOU MIGHT ASK, AREN'T YOU TALKING about vengeance? I say, yes, that's part of it, and why not? Vengeance is a universal social phenomenon. Adam Smith wrote that "retaliation seems to be the great law that is dictated by nature."⁴⁰ Francis Bacon wrote that "revenge is a kind of wild justice."⁴¹ You find it even in primitive anarchist societies. Let's try to understand what it is before condemning it prematurely.

Vengeance isn't just an emotional outburst. Of course emotion enters into it, but you can say that about prayer, or laughter, or gambling, or anything that people do. In fact, vengeance is most effective when you carry it out after your immediate anger dies down. As the saying goes, "revenge is a dish best served cold."

Vengeance isn't an internally generated impulse. Vengeance is a response. It's a response to something that somebody does to you that harms you somehow *and* that you think is wrong. And while emotion does enter into it, often, so does calculation. Vengeance is really just criminal self-help where the purpose is mainly getting even, not getting compensated.

Is that irrational? Not necessarily. If honor is a high value for you, as it is for me, getting even may be more important than getting compensated. Unavenged wrongs can rankle even to the point of physical distress. But in many cases, whether you're touchy about your honor or not,

getting compensated isn't possible anyway – for reasons previously discussed. That doesn't mean you have to let the bastard get off scot free.

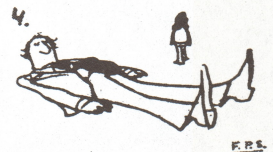
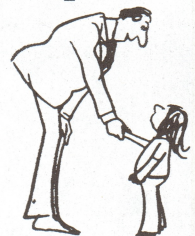
Some of my enemies have gotten away with plenty, but my retaliation hurt them, sometimes permanently. It may not be all they've got coming, but, for all they know, I'm not through with them. They worry about that. They really do. And they should. And every time they worry about me, that punishes them a little bit more. There are some people worrying right now, just because I'm in town.⁴²

Extralegal retaliation is one form of an honored anarchist practice, direct action. Anybody who thinks vengeance can't be an appropriate anarchist response, should remember the Wobbly slogan: "We never forget." Or consider the anarchist bombings and assassinations of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which were often announced to be reprisals for specific state actions, often actions taken against anarchists. Some anarchists now question the morality or prudence of these *attentats*, but the history at least shows that criminal self-help as vengeance is part of the anarchist tradition.

Criminal self-help has another advantage over resort to the law. You retain your autonomy and possibly even have an opportunity for creativity. If you go to the police, that's all you can do. Whatever happens after that, if anything does, is out of your hands. You may even be disadvantaged if you later resort to private retaliation because you have, in advance, notified the police that you are a suspect if something happens. If, on the other hand, you go in for do-it-yourself justice right from the get-go, you are at least self-sufficient.

I mentioned creativity. Let me provide a personal anecdote. I lived in an apartment building where I had an obnoxious upstairs neighbor. We had several hostile encounters. Once, I was walking along and cutting through a corner parking lot, and this guy drove by, he turned into the lot, and tried to run me down. Probably he wouldn't really have done that, but, you run away scared all the same. Something I did get out of this experience, however, was that I knew which car was his. Naturally he parked it near the apartment. My feeling about his car was similar to when a child abuses his toys: you take them away. So I slashed his tires. This is what I call "ironic justice." I must confess, slashing tires

"What did you learn in school today?"





has been a source of satisfaction to me on more than one occasion.

This individual soon moved away. "Avoidance," moving away, is, according to Sally Engle Merry, the ultimate resolution of most of the disputes in her study, the ones that police and courts never resolved.⁴³ It was the resolution of my own dispute with certain leftist gentry in the Bay Area.

Vendettas And Feuds

AT THIS POINT I SHOULD MENTION vendettas and feuds, which might be defined, roughly, as reciprocal vengeance between groups. They start out as conflicts between individuals who belong to different groups and escalate into conflicts between the groups that they belong to. The retaliation may not be against the original offender. Revenge might be taken against any adult male in his group, whether based on biological or fictive kinship, the latter exemplified as taking place, for example, between rival youth gangs, or feuding Mafia families. Sometimes feuds persist for more than a generation, but usually not. The famous feud between the McCoy and the Hatfields lasted 12 years, with 12 fatalities.⁴⁴ In one case on a Pacific island, it was 225 years

until the final act of retaliation.⁴⁵ There they *really* never forget.

All I want to say about that is that these activities can't usually be said to resolve conflicts or maintain social order, except where one side exterminates the other, or both sides just get tired of it, as happened with the McCoy-Hatfield feud. Feuding has a certain romantic appeal for me, maybe because I long for a group which would back me up. I've never had one. Vendetta and feud aren't likely even to arise in modern societies because we don't usually have kinship groups, just some relatives, or other solitary groups to call upon.

Risks And Costs Of Criminal Self-Help

I'M NOT SAYING THAT CRIME, CONSIDERED as self-help conflict resolution, or social control, is always, or even often, a good idea. It involves risks and costs. There's always the risk that the victim, if he knows or suspects who you are, will retaliate, if he can. And there's the additional risk of getting arrested, as Francis Bacon perspicuously observed: "The most tolerable sort of revenge is for those wrongs which there is no law to remedy: but then let a man take heed, the revenge be such as there is no law to punish, else a man's enemy is still beforehand, and it is two for one."⁴⁶ I've explained that the risk is lower if the crime is between intimates, especially if they are of low status. The police are then far less likely to make an arrest. But the Vera Institute study would have had nothing to study, if New York's Finest hadn't arrested, in one year, tens of thousands of felony suspects who had prior relationships with the victim. In these cases, if you're arrested, prosecuted, and convicted, you may expect a relatively lenient sentence. But nobody likes to be arrested, prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced, even if it is lenient.

In saying this I hope I've anticipated the charge that I'm romanticizing crime the way some anarchists, such as Bakunin, have been accused of doing. I'm not bringing in Robin Hood or Zorro or other so-called social bandits.⁴⁷ I'm not implying that there is anything inherently anarchist about crime. Where professional criminals are involved, criminals and police can get so intermingled that it's hard to tell them apart. Where police infiltrate radical

groups, sometimes their agents get carried away, not only inciting, but committing crimes.

So my argument doesn't depend on regarding criminals as unconscious revolutionaries. I think that's ridiculous. Only leftist intellectuals, who couldn't get themselves arrested if they tried, believe that. Criminals are mostly ordinary people, and ordinary people aren't unconscious revolutionaries either, despite what you may have heard from your friendly neighborhood class-struggle anarchist. They are ordinary people who victimize other ordinary people. Very few are psychopaths, and even fewer are revolutionaries. They don't rob from the rich and give to the poor. They rarely get to rob from the rich. The rich are hardened targets. And when the poor do rob from the rich, or from the poor, they don't give to the poor. They keep or fence the swag. About the only thing that may distinguish criminals from other people is their, on average, somewhat lesser self-control, their greater impulsiveness.⁴⁸ Which may mean nothing more than that they are more likely to get caught. Ours is a "world in which the fortunate are so very often the merely not found out."⁴⁹ After all, we are all criminals.

Is Criminal Self-Help Just?

CRIMINAL SELF-HELP MEANS THAT PEOPLE who think that they've been wronged take the law into their own hands. It's not a practice which is necessarily more fair than putting a case into the criminal justice system. There's a legal adage that no one should be the judge in his own case. But in cases of self-help through crime, that's exactly what happens. It's like the title of the first Mike Hammer thriller: *I, the Jury*. There isn't any due process of law in self-help cases. As Donald Black says, criminal self-help is "the expression of a grievance by unilateral aggression."⁵⁰ You don't have any rights when your enemy is your self-appointed judge.

However, I would make three points in defense of self-help justice, considered as justice:

The first point, which is perhaps less than compelling, is that the criminal, in a case between intimates, at least knows all about his prior relationship with the victim which is the real basis of the dispute. It is otherwise in criminal court, where "facts that are relevant to restoring a balance, such as the past history of

the dispute and the community reputation of the disputants, may be excluded as irrelevant to the particular case."⁵¹ The avenger is biased, but at least he's fully informed about the interpersonal context of the crime, whereas the judge is not, because most of that context is legally irrelevant.

The second point is that, in a legal system where most felonies and almost no misdemeanors come to trial, the victim or complainant usually gets little or no due process from the law either. The body of law is so massive that, "if all the laws were to be enforced, people would not be able to move. They can do so only because the police and the courts use discretion."⁵² The system is shot through with discretion from start to finish. Police don't have to arrest anybody, and prosecutors don't have to charge anybody. Those decisions are unilateral on their part, and having made them, they are answerable to nobody. The complainant or victim has no meaningful opportunity, after complaining, to be involved in these decisions.

The minimum definition of procedural due process, according to American constitutional law, is notice of a contemplated action and the opportunity to be heard.⁵³ If an arrest is made and if charges are filed, the complainant or victim has no notice of, or opportunity to be heard at, the decision to prosecute or not, which will be the private, unilateral decision of a prosecutor. At a criminal trial, due process shines forth in all its glory – sometimes. But criminal trials are rare. And the complainant/victim gets no special consideration there. He or she is only a witness, not a participant.⁵⁴

The third, and maybe the most important point, is that the criminal justice system is biased, not in a personal way, but in an institutional way. I discussed that earlier, drawing upon Donald Black's writings and other studies. The system is systematically discriminatory. It advantages "Repeat Players," regular users of the courts – such as prosecutors, landlords, and creditors – as against "One Shotters," people with little or no prior experience with the legal system. When the One-Shotters encounter it, they are usually on the receiving end, as defendants – these include accused criminals, tenants, and debtors.⁵⁵

The system is biased in favor of the higher status person, whether criminal or victim, as

against the lower status person, whether criminal or victim. It's biased against lower status people generally, when they have disputes, which aren't taken seriously, especially if these people aren't white.

Even the state's law recognizes what is called the Rule of Necessity: even if a judge is biased, he must decide the case before him if no other judge has jurisdiction.⁵⁶ In other words: better law without due process than no law at all. Of course, the Necessity doesn't alleviate the unfairness. In the leading American case announcing the Rule of Necessity, Chancellor James Kent of New York had to decide a case – because nobody else was authorized to – to which his brother-in-law was a party.⁵⁷ Guess who won? If my arguments have any merit, there are many people who face a similar choice. *Of*

We need to confront the popular fear of anarchism head-on, and use every honest argument to dispel it

course they're biased, they are victims of crime, or of abuses ignored by the law, but nobody else is going to deal with their grievances. That's why there's so much criminal self-help. It is, for some, a felt Necessity.

Which Is Better?

IN A LAW-RIDDEN STATE SOCIETY SUCH as ours, neither law nor crime is always the best way to deal with disputes. Deriving as they both do from the state, law and crime compete to be the lesser evil. There isn't any general answer. It all depends on the nature of the dispute, the social status of the disputants, what the law actually is, the availability or unavailability of third parties such as mediators or arbitrators or judges, and the facts of the case.⁵⁸ Nobody has even tried to measure to what extent social order in this society depends on law enforcement, or on crime, or on activity which is neither law enforcement nor crime, or on other influences. That's impossible. Nobody could quantify these

factors. But nobody who is well-informed can minimize the importance of any of them, with the possible exception of the enforcement of the criminal law.

Conclusion

MY ARGUMENT IS JUST THIS: IN A statist, law-ridden society like ours, social order isn't only, or even mainly, imposed by law. It has other supports. The one I've singled out is crime, for two reasons: (1) because it's been largely overlooked, and (2) because it's a genuinely anarchist source of order which is of some importance.

I think that this argument should be added to the existing arguments why anarchy doesn't mean chaos. It's consistent with the other arguments. It is anticipated by Kropotkin's classic argument that collective self-help, "mutual aid," is a major source of social order even in state societies,⁵⁹ although Kropotkin made little if any reference to mutual aid as a means of dispute resolution. Anarchists also argue that in a cooperative, egalitarian society, there would be far less crime (and virtually no property crime). What's left would be handled, whenever possible, in a less punitive and more conciliatory manner.

In an anarchist society, a conflict isn't wrenched out of its interpersonal context – if it has one – as, we suppose, in a decentralized anarchist society, it usually will. There doesn't have to be a judgment of guilt or innocence. Anarchist methods work best where the law is at its worst, where the conflict or grievance involves a dispute, not impersonal unilateral aggression, and arises out of a prior relationship. The evidence of anthropology supports those arguments. It supports my argument.

The popular fear of anarchism above all consists of the fear that, without military and police protection, people would be helpless against violent predation. Errico Malatesta saw this, as he saw many things, clearly: every anarchist "is familiar with the key objections: who will keep criminals in check?" He believed their danger to be, as I do, greatly exaggerated. But (he goes on to say) "delinquency" will "certainly not disappear following a revolution, however radical and thoroughgoing it may turn out to be."

Therefore: "It is worthwhile and indeed necessary that anarchists should consider the problem in greater detail than they normally do, not only the better to deal with a popular 'objection' but in order not to expose themselves to unpleasant surprises and dangerous contradictions."⁶⁰ Sage advice: but anarchists have usually slighted the matter.⁶¹

We need to confront the popular fear of anarchism head-on, and use every honest argument to dispel it. Most of the traditional anarchist answers still have some validity – although they need to be critically revised and modernized. But these answers have obviously failed to convince more than a few people – as, indeed, all our arguments have failed to convince more than a few people.

The supposed protections of the law are overrated, and anarchists have overlooked some of the evidence of this.⁶² The predatory predilections of some people are exaggerated by the law-and-order establishment and their academic camp followers, although, we shouldn't pretend that there aren't some bad guys, or that they will all respond well to love and therapy.⁶³ The capacities of people self-acting, individually or collectively, for self-protection have been underrated. People are already operating, usually apart from the law, and often against the law, in various ways to resolve their conflicts. This is what we should try to convince people of. They should be informed that "anarchy is found in all societies to some degree."⁶⁴ And that there would be effective ways in anarchist society to deal with the disputes, which may always be with us, which arise in everyday life, and also – more severely – ways to deal with chronic predators or people who just have no self-control.

I am not convinced that there are so many chronic troublemakers, even now, that enough of them couldn't be convinced, cured, or contained; or shamed and shunned; or run out of town; or as a last resort – and I accept this, as all primitive stateless societies have apparently accepted it – even *killed*, rather than compromise the anarchism that everybody else wants to live, or try to live, if everybody else ever wants to live this way, or at least to go along with those of us who do. Indiscriminate tolerance did in the Flower Children. If the choice is between Hannibal Lechter and anarchy, I prefer anarchy minus Hannibal Lechter.

But this issue is more silly than serious. One of the greatest ironies of state society is that the state is much worse at protecting us than it is at preventing us from protecting ourselves.⁶⁵ As Francis Bacon put it, where you had one enemy, now you have two. And the state is best of all at protecting the state. Under anarchy, there will be only one enemy, and you, and your friends, and the friends of anarchy will deal with the common enemy, feeling a sense of solidarity, just like Durkheim said!

What Bacon called wild justice is better than no justice at all. I like my justice to be a little wild. For all its drawbacks, taking the law into your own hands can be a source of satisfaction, even exhilaration, that you just can't get by working through the system. I earlier insisted, and I still do, that vengeance isn't just a reflexive, emotional lashing-out. But neither is vengeance just the result of a cold cost-benefit analysis. It has an emotional dimension, and why not? It's expressive as well as instrumental. Vengeance can be empowering. Along with the justice of vengeance, there's the *joy* of vengeance. And isn't anarchism the only politics of joy? ④

Endnotes

- 1 "Introduction by Howard Zinn: The Art of Revolution," in Herbert Read, *Anarchy & Order: Essays in Politics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), xv. "Law and order is the historical illusion; law versus order is the historical reality." Stanley Diamond, "The Rule of Law versus the Order of Custom," *The Rule of Law*, ed. Robert Paul Wolff (New York: Touchstone Books, 1971), 140; see also Edgar Z. Friedenberg, "The Side Effects of the Legal Process," *ibid.*, 45.
- 2 See, e.g., "Law and Authority," Kropotkin's *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York: Dover Books, 1970), 216-17 & passim. In the timeless words of Chicago Mayor Richard Daley: "The police are not here to create disorder; they're here to maintain disorder." Quoted in Gertrude Block, "Language Tips," *New York State Bar Ass'n Journal* 83(5) (June 2011), 57.
- 3 Émile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, tr. George Simpson (New York: Macmillan, 1933), 102. "Crime has the useful function of maintaining these [collective] sentiments at the same degree of intensity, for they would soon diminish if offenses against them were not punished." Émile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, ed. George E.G. Catlin,

tr. Sarah A. Solovay & John Mueller (8th ed.; New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), 96. A similar view has been attributed to Georg Simmel by Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York: The Free Press, 1956), 127; see Georg Simmel, *Sociology: Inquiries into the Construction of Social Forms*, tr. & ed. Anthony J. Blasi, Anton K. Jacobs & Mathew Kanjirathinkal (Leiden, Netherlands & Boston, MA: Brill, 2009), 1: 29 (referring to "the importance of a common opponent for the inner cohesion of a group") & 1: 279 ff.

- 4 See, e.g., Alexander Berkman, *What Is Communist Anarchism?* (New York: Dover Publications, 1972), 186; Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1989), 19.
- 5 "Social Control as a Dependent Variable," in *Towards a General Theory of Social Control*, ed. Donald Black (2 vols.; Orlando, FL: Academic Press, 1984), 1: 3. My argument owes a great deal to Donald Black, "Crime as Social Control," in *Towards a General Theory of Social Control*, 2: 1-27.
Half of all crimes are not even reported to the police. James F. Anderson & Laronistine Dyson, *Criminological Theories: Understanding Crime in America* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002), 37. This statistic refers to the seven "index" crimes – all felony "street" crimes – in the Uniform Crime Reports compiled by the FBI. According to the National Crime Survey (based on self-reports), in 1982 (the annual variation is slight), 39% of aggravated assaults, 42% of robberies, 45% of rapes, and 49% of burglaries were not reported to the police. Michael R. Gottfredson & Travis Hirschi, *A General Theory of Crime* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 19. No government agency regularly compiles data on corporate or white-collar crimes, which are almost never reported to law enforcement agencies. No one compiles statistics on misdemeanors even if they are reported.
- 6 "Not the fear of legal penalties, but the fear of loss of status in the group is the effective deterrent. ... Regardless of the official methods of dealing with criminals we shall retain this method of control by group pressure." Edwin H. Sutherland, *Principles of Criminology* (New York: Lippincott, 1947), 374.
- 7 "Politics as a Vocation," *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. & tr. Hans Gerth & C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 78 (emphasis in the original).
- 8 Donald Black, *The Behavior of Law* (New York: Academic Press, 1976), 124.
- 9 Black, "Crime as Social Control," 2: 13. My argument does not depend upon the assumption that those who inflict unilateral violence on others, thinking that they are justified, are justified by moral standards prevailing in other sectors of society, or even in their own. For most of my readers it may be

almost unthinkable, for example, that wife-beaters can think that they're justified, but usually they do think so. Looking back on American history, there was vigilante justice, which was enforced by self-appointed groups (usually, of the better sort of people) where law enforcement was considered to be corrupt or ineffectual. It's difficult to judge, today, how fair that justice was, if by fairness is meant, convicting and punishing the guilty. Then there was lynch law in the South, which, so far as we know, was, in that sense, almost never fair – but then it was always carried out with the connivance of local law enforcement. I would be the last person to say that social control is always a good thing. I am only saying that it happens, and not only from state action. We no longer have vigilantes or lynch mobs. Self-help criminal social control is now almost always individual. In anarchist jargon, it is still "direct action," but it's usually not "mutual aid."

- 10 Black, *Behavior of Law*, 2.
- 11 Black, "Social Control as a Dependent Variable," 1: 2.
- 12 "Law varies inversely with other social control." Black, *Behavior of Law*, 107.
- 13 Black, "Crime as Social Control," 2: 17.
- 14 Black, *Behavior of Law*, 123-137.
- 15 Black, "Social Control as a Dependent Variable," 1: n. 1, 5. But "Deviant behavior is conduct that is subject to social control ..."! Black, *Behavior of Law*, 9. This apparent circularity need not distract us from the main point that extralegal conduct, including crime, has some of the social effects claimed for law. Criminologists ask: Why do people commit crimes? Black asks: "Why do people commit social control?" Black, "Social Control as an Independent Variable," 1: 14.
- 16 Simmel, *Sociology*, 1: 23.
- 17 Renzo Novatore, *Toward the Creative Nothing* (n.p.: Venomous Butterfly, 2000) (not paginated).
- 18 Black, "Social Control as a Dependent Variable," 1: 5.
- 19 Black denies the argument of some of his critics (a criticism which also occurred to me) that his theory implies that there is a fixed level or quantity of social control in all societies. Black, "Social Control as a Dependent Variable," 1: 15 n. 20. Surely there are, or have been, societies with less social control than, say, North Korea.
- 20 Black, "Social Control as a Dependent Variable," 1: 8-12.
- 21 To make this statement more accurate, I should add, as a fact, that B, if he has to, intends to deny that the bicycle belonged to A. If A believes (as he does) that he has a right to possession of the bicycle, he lacks the mental element for larceny, the intent to steal, which would be necessary to both the robbery and larceny charges. (This is also why B committed

- no crime in merely failing to return the bicycle, if he intended to return it at the time when he borrowed it.) The police, who don't know who is lying, will probably not arrest anybody.
- 22 Malcolm M. Feeley, *The Process Is the Punishment: Handling Cases in a Lower Criminal Court* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1979), 9, 261.
- 23 Vera Institute of Justice, *Felony Arrests: Their Prosecution and Disposition in New York City's Courts* (rev. ed.; New York: Vera Institute of Justice and New York & London: Longmans, 1981), 1-2.
- 24 Ibid., 19.
- 25 Black, "Crime as Social Control," 2: 20.
- 26 Laura Nader & Harry F. Todd, Jr., "Introduction," *The Disputing Process – Law in Ten Societies*, ed. Laura Nader & Harry F. Todd, Jr. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 16.
- 27 Black, "Crime as Social Control," 2: 1.
- 28 Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, 127.
- 29 Sally Engle Merry, "Going to Court: Strategies of Dispute Management in an American Urban Neighborhood," in *The Law & Society Reader*, ed. Richard Abel (New York & London: New York University Press, 1995), 43. "Admittedly, there are conflicts that seem to exclude any other dynamic: e.g. that between the robber or rowdy and his victim." Simmel, *Sociology*, 1: 236. The traditional anarchist argument is that crimes of greed – property crimes – will virtually disappear under anarchy, in conditions of abundance and equality. I think this is a good argument, although the issue is studiously avoided by criminologists and sociologists of law, who are, almost to a man (and the women are no better), policy pimps. But the anarchists are not so convincing when they discuss hate crimes, sex crimes, and, in general, impulsive or other emotionally motivated crimes. It is all very well to say that, after a generation or two grows up in an enlightened anarchist society, crimes of passion or resentment will also disappear. This is belied by the prevalence of such occurrences in stateless primitive societies. See, e.g., Nader & Todd, eds., *The Disputing Process*; E. Adamson Hoebel, *The Law of Primitive Man: A Study in Comparative Legal Dynamics* (New York: Atheneum, 1968). These anarchist societies merit our consideration, not because they have no disputes, but because many of them resolve disputes better than modern state societies do.
- 30 Merry, "Going to Court," 36.
- 31 Feeley, *The Process Is the Punishment*, 46.
- 32 Merry found that "the court serves as a sanction, a way of harassing an enemy, rather than as a mode of airing and resolving disputes. It serves as an alternative to violence for those unable or unwilling to fight." "Going to Court," 54. Young men usually dealt with their disputes by fighting. Most women went to court. Ibid., 49.
- 33 Black, *Behavior of Law*, 112-13.
- 34 Black, "Crime as Social Control." 2: 17; M.P. Baumgartner, "Social Control from Below," in *Toward a General Theory of Social Control*, 1: 303-04.
- 35 Black, "Crime as Social Control." 2: 18. In the ghetto there is "no access [to law] and lots of self-help." Nader & Todd, "Introduction," 40. However, it's not that there's *no* access to law – as the article by Merry ("Going to Court") showed, low-income people in some settings may file many criminal complaints – but rather that the law rarely resolves their disputes.
- 36 Black, "Social Control as an Independent Variable," 1: 15; Black, *Behavior of Law*, 92-93.
- 37 Black, *Behavior of Law*, 96.
- 38 Black, "Crime as Social Control." 2: 4-5, 10-11; Baumgartner, "Social Control from Below," 1: 309-11.
- 39 Baumgartner, "Social Control from Below," 1: 310; Donald R. Cressey, *Other People's Money: A Study in the Social Psychology of Embezzlement* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1953), 57-62.
- 40 Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1969), 117.
- 41 Francis Bacon, "Of Revenge," *The Essayes*, ed. John Pitcher (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1973), 73. By way of full disclosure I must add that Sir Francis (later Lord Verulam), a government prosecutor and later the highest judge (Lord Chancellor) of England, immediately added, "which the more men's nature runs to, the more ought the law to weed it out." Sir Francis implicitly admits that, as Adam Smith said, the will to vengeance comes naturally. Lord Verulam himself did some time for corruption in the Tower of London, the world's first country club prison.
- 42 This essay is based on a presentation I made at the 11th annual BASTARD conference on April 10, 2011, in Berkeley, California. For the background to these remarks about my Bay Area enemies, see Bob Black, *The Baby and the Bathwater: The Unspeakable Truth about Processed World* (1½ ed.; Berkeley, CA: Slobboviated Press, 1985), which will soon be available online at The Anarchist Library.
- 43 Merry, "Going to Court," 36, 55.
- 44 Altina L. Waller, *Feud: Hatfields, McCoys, and Social Change in Appalachia, 1860-1900* (Chapel Hill, NC & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 6. The real history of this feud is nothing like what people imagine. It commenced with litigation over possession of a pig. Ibid., 2-3. An interfamily extramarital romance was also involved. Ibid., 3. The families did as much litigating and prosecuting as shooting; one case went as far as the U.S. Supreme Court. State politics was also involved (the McCoys had a power base in Kentucky, the Hatfields in West Virginia).

- 45 Rolf Kuschel, *Vengeance is Their Reply: Blood Feuds and Homicide on Bellona Island. Part I: Conditions Underlying Generations of Bloodshed* (Copenhagen: Denmark: Dansk psykologisk Forlag, 1988), 18-19.
- 46 Bacon, "Of Revenge," 73.
- 47 The originator of the concept of social banditry, the Communist Party historian E.J. Hobsbawm, was carefully modest about its scope and frequency, and aware of its ambiguity. E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1965), ch. 2. Although it was not then the pressing concern for Marxists that it became later – and especially after 1989 – Hobsbawm even in the 1950s advanced the traditional anti-anarchist Marxist agenda, minimizing the significance of the anarchist Makhnovist insurgency in Ukraine, even though the scale of its military operations and social reconstruction was far beyond banditry, social or otherwise. *Ibid.*, 28 & n. 2. For histories of the insurgency, see Peter Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement, 1918-1921*, tr. Lorraine & Fredy Perlman (Detroit, MI: Black & Red and Solidarity and Chicago, IL: Solidarity, 1974); Voline, *The Unknown Revolution, 1917-1921* (Detroit, MI: Black & Red and Chicago, IL: Solidarity, 1974), 541-711.

In 1990 – a bad year for Commies! – Hobsbawm published the final revised edition of his book on social banditry: *Bandits* (rev. ed.; New York: The New Press, 1990). This final time around, he ignored Makhno entirely, but added a chapter, almost unreferenced, vilifying anarchists from Bakunin to Francisco Sabaté. *Ibid.*, 120-138. By then, his concept of social banditry had come under devastating criticism of which the most formidable, as he acknowledged, was Anton Blok, *The Mafia of a Sicilian Village, 1860-1960: A Study of Violent Peasant Entrepreneurs* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), 97-102. I read the book in manuscript, when I was doing independent study under Blok at the University of Michigan.
- 48 Gottfredson & Hirschi, *A General Theory of Crime*, 93-96. Even that generalization isn't firmly established: "No consistent, statistically significant differences between personality traits of delinquents and personality traits of nondelinquents have been found." Edwin H. Sutherland & Donald R. Cressey, *Criminology* (9th ed.; Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1974), 170. "Almost all crimes involve the expression of qualities that a man should not lack." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, ed. Rüdiger Bittner, tr. Kate Sturge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 184.
- 49 Ford Madox Ford, in Joseph Conrad & Ford Madox Ford, *The Nature of a Crime* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1924), 97.
- 50 Black, "Crime as Social Control." 2: 2.
- 51 Merry, "Going to Court," 52. Some of these facts may be elicited, following conviction, in a pre-sentencing report. Even aside from the low quality of these reports, they are only prepared in the small fraction of cases which have resulted in convictions for crime. And they are only considered with respect to punishment, not guilt.
- 52 William Clifford, "Alternatives to the Criminal Court System," in *Neighborhood Justice: Assessment of an Emerging Idea*, ed. Roman Tomasic & Malcolm M. Feeley (New York & London: Longman, 1982), 206.
- 53 *Mullane v. Central Hanover Bank & Trust Co.*, 339 U.S. 306, 313 (1950).
- 54 Beginning in the 1970s, there's been a faddish concern for the victim, often referred to as "the forgotten man," "the forgotten man," which has been institutionalized in several ways, including the opportunity for victims to participate in the sentencing decision. Conservatives like that because it would introduce yet another influence in the direction of harsher punishment, as if there weren't enough such influences already. Liberals like it because liberals like victims. Victims themselves usually can't be bothered, and indeed their participation is pointless in a system of unlimited discretion in the prosecutor, and plea bargaining as the immediate determinant of nearly all sentences. For my critique, see Robert C. Black, "Forgotten Penological Purposes: A Critique of Victim Participation in Sentencing," *Am. J. of Jurisprudence* 39 (1994): 225-240.
- 55 Marc Galanter, "How the 'Haves' Come Out Ahead: Speculations on the Limits of Legal Change," 9 *Law & Society Rev.* (1974): 95-151, abridged reprint in Abel, ed., *Law & Society Reader*. I might have based my argument, to a considerable degree, on Galanter rather than Black, but there wasn't time and space to do justice to both. Their approaches are very different, but their conclusions are similar. Both, for instance, emphasize the advantage organizations have over individuals. Galanter, unlike Black, takes institutional legal processes seriously, and in that respect I think he has a stronger argument. But then Galanter and I are lawyers and Black is not.
- 56 *United States v. Will*, 449 U.S. 200, 213-15 (1980). The Rule goes back to a case in medieval England where the judge himself was the plaintiff. Y.B. Hil., 8 Hen. VI, f. 19, pl. 6 (1430).
- 57 *Moers v. White*, 6 Johns. Cas. 360 (N.Y. Ch. 1822). The ultra-conservative Kent was nationally renowned not only for his equity jurisprudence but for his influential treatises on constitutional law and other subjects. At the New York State Library in Albany, I came across a small collection of Kent's letters. In 1845, at age 82, Kent voted in a New York City election. He found the experience

so repugnant that he vowed never to vote again. Elections, he wrote, "are all a farce & we are cheated out of our rights by knavery & violence. I feel degraded to go to the Poll and put in a Ballot amidst Vagabonds [mostly Irish] any one of whom destroys my vote. I consider Democracy a humbug & at the late City Election for Mayor I did not go to the Poll." Letter to Ambrose Spencer, A.L.S., April 14, 1845, James Kent Collection, 1785-1845, New York State Library. Kent was of course correct about democracy. See also Bob Black, *Debunking Democracy* (Berkeley, CA: CAL Press, 2011).

- 58 Black, "Social Control as a Dependent Variable," 2: 7-8. I have not discussed here the third factor – the forms of dispute processing as such (conciliation, negotiation, mediation, arbitration, adjudication, etc.) as they have been classified by, e.g., Nader & Todd, "Introduction," 9-11; Frank E.A. Sander, "Varieties of Dispute Processing," in Tomasic & Feeley, eds., *Neighborhood Justice*, 26-29. Amusingly, Sander dismisses several evidently less respectable mechanisms, including self-help, as "not of central concern here because of their limited utility or acceptability," *ibid.*, 29 – although a community study in the same volume found a primary reliance on self-help, Suzann R. Thomas-Buckle & Leonard G. Buckle, "Doing onto Others: Disputes and Dispute Processing in an Urban American Neighborhood," *ibid.*, 79-80. With respect to American criminal prosecutions, only adjudication matters – the attempts to insert the other disputing procedures into the legal system have been few and far between and usually "court-annexed," i.e., they are just ways for prosecutors (who must approve these referrals) to unload some of what they call garbage cases. On the rise and rapid fall of these failed reforms, see Roman Tomasic, "Mediation as an Alternative to Adjudication: Rhetoric and Reality in the Neighborhood Justice Movement," in *Neighborhood Justice*, 215-48. Bail reform, pretrial diversion, sentencing reform, and speedy trial rules are among other failed reforms. Malcolm M. Feeley, *Court Reform on Trial: When Simple Solutions Fail* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), chs. 2-5.
- 59 Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, ed. Paul Avrich (New York: New York University Press, 1972), especially chapters. 7-8.
- 60 "Crime and Punishment," *Malatesta: His Life & Ideas*, comp. & ed. Vernon Richards (London: Freedom Press, 1977), 105. For an example, an anarchist, "Scott W.," who recently, in "The [sic] Anarchist Response to Crime," laid out a post-revolutionary anarchist crime-control scenario – complete with police (renamed "militias," assisted by "forensic collectives" and "detective collectives") and prisons, and he explained that we will need a few generations to eradicate crime.

Then it will wither away, perhaps. The term "collective" is apparently unlimitedly elastic, inclusive, and approving, if even detectives and crime lab technicians are okay, so long as they are organized into collectives. Scott's essay, and my rejoinder, "An Anarchist Response to 'The Anarchist Response to Crime,'" are available online at The Anarchist Library.

- 61 The problem of "delinquency ... has not occupied a great space in anarchist theory, Peter Kropotkin brushing it aside contemptuously. In a free society there will be no crime." Stuart Christie, "Publisher's Foreword" to Larry Tift & Dennis Sullivan, *The Struggle to Be Human: Crime, Criminology, and Anarchism* (Sanday, Orkney, Scotland: Cienfuegos Press, 1980), xiii. Christie was right, but unfortunately, the Tift and Sullivan book adds nothing to an anarchist theory of crime. It is mostly just liberal humanist moralistic whining and whimpering to the effect that the state is the *real* criminal. That, besides being self-contradictory nonsense (crime is defined by law, which is produced and selectively enforced by the state), legitimizes the concept of crime, which presupposes law, which presupposes the state. A better (written) and briefer version of a related argument is in Alex Comfort, *Authority and Delinquency in the Modern State: A Criminological Approach to the Problem of Power* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1950). Dr. Comfort (yes, he's the author of *The Joy of Sex*) argues that where there exists a state, predators and psychopaths are likely to staff it in disproportionate numbers. Not only does power corrupt, power attracts the already corrupt. That's fine – as far as it goes. If AK Press or PM Press had even a slight interest in reprinting genuine anarchist classics, they should reprint this one. But, since they don't, they won't.

But, who are the real criminals? *Criminals* are the real criminals. Am I being simple? Sure. Better to be simply right than simply wrong.

- 62 For example, one of the rare examples of experimental research in criminology is reported in George L. Kelling, Tony Pate, Duane Dieckman, & Charles E. Brown, *The Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment: A Summary Report* (Washington, DC: The Police Foundation, 1974), available at www.policefoundation.org. Preventive police patrol – that is, police driving around looking for trouble, or pretending to – was systematically discontinued, without notice to the public, in one neighborhood after another. (The police still answered service calls, as the fire department does.) The withdrawal of preventive police patrol protection had no effect on reported crime rates. It had no effect on citizen perceptions

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Dark Tidings:

Anarchist Politics in the Age of Collapse

BY URI GORDON

THE WRITING HAS BEEN ON THE WALL for decades. Only large helpings of ignorance, arrogance, and denial could conspire to portray an entirely rational prognosis as the irrational rantings of a doom-crying fringe. But now, as reality begins to slap us repeatedly in the face, pattern recognition is finally and rapidly sinking in. There is no averting our eyes any longer: industrial civilization is coming down.

Already the whirlwind surrounds us. Energy prices shoot up, reflecting the recent peak in global oil production and its inevitable decline. Hurricanes, droughts, and erratic weather become more frequent and intense, bringing home the consequences of climate change. Meanwhile soil and water quality continue to deteriorate, and biodiversity is crashing. The trenchant global food price crisis is the strongest indication yet that no return to business as usual can be expected. Rather, what we are encountering is the final confrontation between industrial civilization's capitalist imperative for infinite growth and the finite resources and sinks of a single planet. No amount of financial speculation or hi-tech intervention will buy the system its way out of the inevitable crash. The time of the turning has come, and we are the generation with the dubious fortune to live and die in its throes.

Many commentators have celebrated the flowering of anarchist activities and intellectual concerns, as anti-capitalist opposition resurges

all over the planet. Yet when coming to offer an international perspective on the future anarchist praxis, we face dark tidings. Anarchists and their allies are now required to project themselves into a future of growing instability and deterioration, and to re-imagine their tactics and strategies in view of the converging crises that will define the 21st century.

In this essay I take stock of the already-unfolding trajectory of global capitalism's collapse, speculate on some of its social consequences, and situate them as challenges to anarchist praxis. Clearly there is no use approaching this task from a seemingly neutral point of view, one that pretends to simply anticipate trends without going into recommendation, promotion, and encouragement. Inasmuch as an attempt is being made to envision rather than merely predict, there is room for suggesting priorities that anarchists might be encouraged to endorse in the coming years.

Collapse and Recuperation

A LONG WITH THE LOOMING THREAT OF runaway climate change, the recent or imminent peak in global oil production marks a clear tipping point towards the collapse of a growth-driven industrial civilization. Without cheap oil there can be no commercial aviation, no monster wheat combines, no communication satellites, no new skyscrapers, and certainly not perpetual growth. Modern food

systems in particular are almost entirely dependent on oil, from the manufacture of fertilizers and pesticides through the powering of irrigation systems and farm machinery and on to packaging and transport. Without cheap oil, factory farming and global trade – as well as many other systems we take for granted – will not be possible. There is no real question about the eventuality of collapse, only about its pace and consequences.

To better understand the behavior of complex systems in crisis, we can turn to Kay Summer and Harry Halpin's recent discussion of dynamic equilibrium and phase transition. Like biological organisms and the Internet, global capitalism is a regenerating complex system, maintained in a state of dynamic rather than static equilibrium. Constant infusions of materials or energy keep the system in flux, oscillating back and forth within certain parameters, like a ball rolling in a valley – also referred to as the system's "basin of attraction." However,

A massive disturbance, or a tiny disturbance of just the right kind, [can] set off a positive feedback loop, to get the ball to roll right out of that valley and into another basin of attraction... these major changes, from one valley to another – known as phase transitions – are often preceded by periods of "critical instability", during which the system is under great strain. It can lurch widely, exhibiting seemingly chaotic behavior, before settling into a new, more stable, state. These periods are known as bifurcation points, because it appears that the system could go one way or another.¹

The interesting times we are living in represent precisely such a period of critical instability. Factors like energy scarcity and climate change are pushing the system increasingly closer to the margins of its basin of attraction, with the resultant collapse representing a phase transition of the same order of magnitude as the ones that led from hunting and gathering to agriculture and, more recently, from agriculture to industrial capitalism.

To be sure, one can only take this way of thinking so far when coming to discuss the finer details of social and political developments and their significance for anarchist praxis. For one

thing, thinking of a system as a whole obscures its own internal contradictions and rivalries, which will influence how the phase transition plays out socially and politically in different countries. Moreover, growing energy scarcity will likely halt and eventually reverse many of the exchanges associated with economic and cultural globalization, leading to fragmentation and a heterogeneity of post-collapse trajectories. At the risk of straining the metaphor, imagine that the rolling ball itself is made of liquid mercury, and at the point of bifurcation breaks up into several drops that flow into various interconnected basins of attraction.

How can these new political realities be described? Here one's vision obviously becomes murkier, but it seems natural to speak of three broad options: new social orders based on freedom and equality, modified social orders based on continued unfreedom and inequality, and a breakdown of social order altogether. In other words: grassroots communism, eco-authoritarianism, or civil war.

Anarchists and their allies are already deeply involved in activities that pull towards the first basin of attraction, and I will return to them later in the discussion. However, for the moment I would like to spend a little more time on the second basin of attraction. The anticipation of establishment responses to collapse is crucial if anarchists and their allies are to remain ahead of the game, rather than merely reactive; hierarchical institutions are already reconditioning themselves to govern collapse.

In this context, *recuperation* remains a central strategy for preserving the hegemony of hierarchical social institutions. Recuperation is the process whereby capitalist society defuses material or cultural threats to itself by re-coding and absorbing them into its own logic.²

Today, the environmental agenda itself is being subject to a massive campaign of this sort. On the surface, we are finally seeing environmental issues enjoying a prominent place in the mainstream discourses of Western publics. Yet increased awareness to climate change and peak oil, as well as to the excesses that have created the perpetual crisis, are accompanied by a wholesale erasure of the radical conclusions that environmental movements have attached to

their warnings. Since the 1960s, environmental activists and writers have emphasized a) the essential contradiction between ecological stability and incessant growth, b) the ideological connection between anthropocentric dominion over nature and the exploitative relations between genders and classes, and c) the need for equality and decentralization as part of any genuinely sustainable society. In contrast, political and business elites have so far been rather successful in promoting a strategy that frames the issues as technical and managerial rather than social, and promotes technological innovation and managed markets in an attempt to manufacture enough stability to keep the system running. Thus we are witnessing:

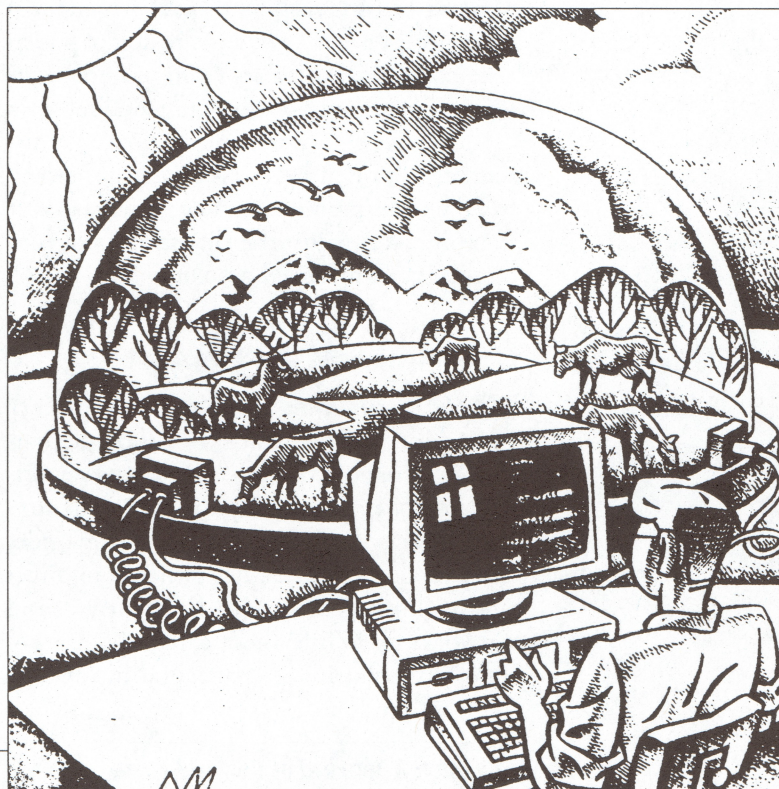
- The normalization of environmental and resource crisis, with floods, extinctions, and shortages packaged as an acceptable facet of contemporary life.
- The commodification of the atmosphere, as marketable debt mechanisms are introduced to regulate the emissions of pollutants and greenhouse gasses.³
- The re-branding of nuclear energy as a “clean alternative” to fossil fuels, unbelievably reversing its status as a hallmark of destruction⁴ with similar efforts underway to integrate genetic engineering into “sustainable agriculture” and land management.⁵
- The absorption of ecological consciousness into consumer culture via new organic food and clothing markets, “green shopping malls,” and the personal carbon offsetting industry.⁶
- A shift in international policy from the promotion of “sustainable development” to an agenda of mitigation, risk management, and damage control.⁷

Perhaps the clearest outward indication of the elite strategy of recuperation is the transformed function of the Group of Eight (G8) summits in response to the yearly rituals of demonstration and disruption. As the writers of the Turbulence group observe,

The G8 reinvented itself...[it] became a media-circus that presents itself as the only forum that can deal with global concerns. In other words, as the G8 came under attack, its very purpose became the re-legitimation of its global authority. And it learnt its lessons well. At Gleneagles, a big NGO operation sponsored by the UK government saw 300,000 people turn out, not to demonstrate against the G8, but to welcome and “lobby” it in favour of debt relief and aid for Africa...in Heiligendamm...the G8 had once again moved on, now seeking to draw legitimacy by seeming to respond to widespread concern about climate change.⁸

All of these processes clearly illustrate an attempt to re-code environmental challenges as opportunities for capitalism, through the creation of new markets and instruments of global governance. Yet such an outward greening of capitalist accumulation will only further exacerbate inequalities, create new enclosures, and impose regimes of austerity on the poor even as business elites cash in on the benefits.

Yet capitalism can only go so far in delaying its confrontation with the objective limits to its growth. Thus the ultimate goal of these recuperative strategies is to buy time, prolonging the period of manageable crisis so as to allow



hierarchical institutions to adapt away from capitalism. While dwindling energy resources will inevitably require a transition to more local and labor-intensive forms of production, this transition can also be an elite-driven process. Such a process would aim at the creation of post-capitalist models of alienated production which, while appropriate for a declining resource base, continue to harness human productive power to arrangements of economic imprisonment. If successful in the long run, such a strategy may usher in new forms of feudalism in which labor is at least partly decommodified and replaced by serfdom – while armed elites retain privileged access to the fruits of a dwindling resource base.⁹

Since this strategy of recuperation can only go so far (not least so because the accumulated experience in anti-capitalist social movements allows them to see through it), its companion strategy – *repression* – will also remain at the center of establishment responses to collapse. It is in this context that postmodern forms of authoritarian governance continue to be refined – from electronic surveillance and genetic profiling to the growing power of private security firms and on to the planned consolidation of NATO and the “European security architecture.”¹⁰ The continuing development of innovations in social control is taking place not only in anticipation of potential geopolitical threats – from resource wars to mass migrations of environmental refugees – but also as a bulwark against domestic dissent, as self-organized grassroots alternatives based on community and mutual aid continue to proliferate against the elite strategy of containment and managed devolution.

Consequences for Praxis

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE developments for the future of anarchist praxis? In order to answer this question, we may classify the myriad actions and projects that anarchists undertake under three broad categories: delegitimation, direct action (both destructive and creative), and networking. While these categories are not mutually exclusive – a particular instance of

anarchist praxis can fall into more than one of them – they do offer useful rubrics for organizing the discussion. In considering each category of praxis in relation to the discussion above, attention is drawn to a number of relevant priorities in each.

Delegitimation refers to anarchist interventions in verbal or symbolic public discourse, whose message is to deny the basic legitimacy of dominant social institutions and eat away at the premises of representative politics, class society, patriarchy, and so on. Unlike protests, which tend to be directed against particular sets of policies and geared to making demands on government and industry to change their behavior, messages of delegitimation are directed against the very existence of hierarchical institutions and, implicitly or explicitly, call for their abolition. Anarchist participation in actions against the World Trade Organization or the International Monetary Fund went beyond demanding change in these institutions’ policies, using the protests as an opportunity to delegitimize capitalism itself. Similarly, anarchist involvement against the Iraq war tended to go beyond highlighting the Bush administration’s contravention of international law or its dubious justifications for invasion, focusing rather on the war’s contribution to capitalist expansion, to the stifling of dissent, and to the “health of the state” more generally.

In the context of anarchist politics in the age of collapse, delegitimation will continue to be a crucial element – increasingly so as a countermeasure to capital’s efforts to absorb the converging crises of the 21st century. This has to do not only with the recasting of environmental challenges as market opportunities for those capable of taking advantage of them, but also – and perhaps more importantly – with their deployment as an instrument of social fear. In line with the decline of the welfare state and its functions over the past decades, governments can no longer base their legitimacy on promises of welfare, education, or health. Rather, their self-justification increasingly hinges on their promises to protect their citizens from drummed-up menaces, ranging from terrorism to juvenile delinquency. Climate, energy, and

food crises can easily become a new weapon in this arsenal. As long as the alarmist talk is not backed up by any form of action that would jeopardize the existing structure of wealth and power, environmental threats are convenient ways to keep the public scared and dependent on established institutions.

Against the campaign of induced collective amnesia intended to detach environmental and social chaos from the capitalist system that created them, anarchists and their allies would be drawn to put forward the clear message that the same social forces and structures responsible for this mess should not be trusted to get us out of it. Such a task will increase in difficulty the more Western governments move in an ostensibly environmentalist and socially progressive direction, as is likely to be the case in the United States and a number of European countries in the coming years. Yet the strength of anarchist perspectives is in their ability to put forward basic critiques that unmask such developments as the time-buying strategies that they are.

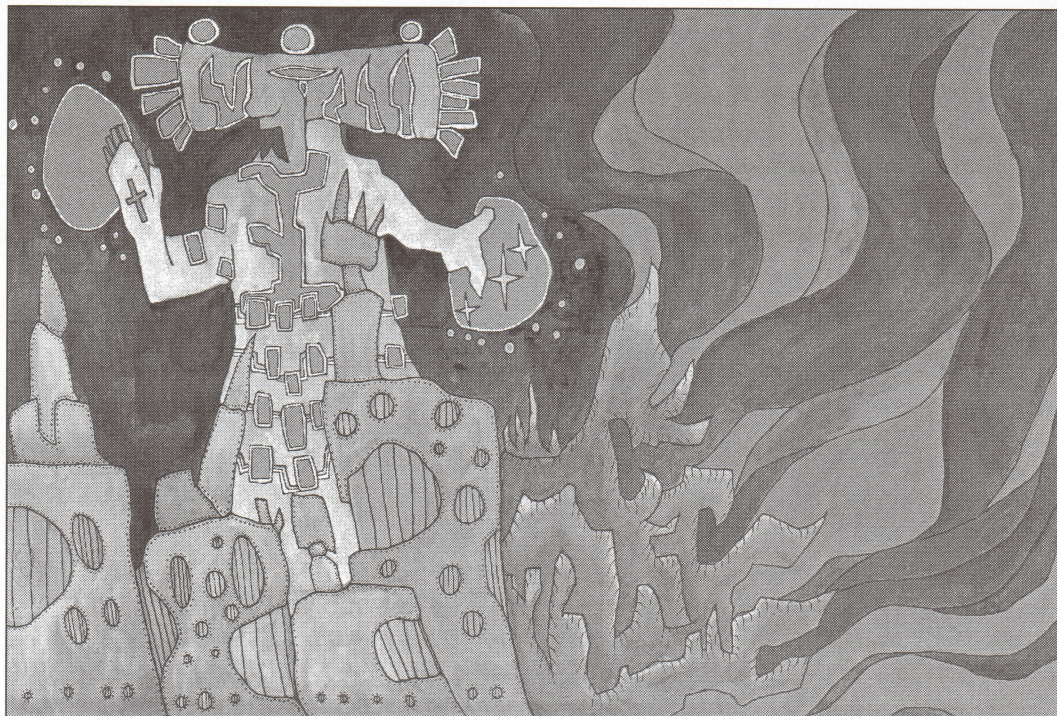
In this context, the obverse possibility should also be considered – that rather than an outwardly progressive turn, the effects of collapse will in some countries encourage the rise of eco-fascism. This term refers to the already extant efforts of parties and organizations on the far right to put an ecological veneer on their authoritarian and racist agendas.¹¹ This includes, for example, using arguments about ecological carrying capacity to justify curbs on immigration, or the twisted incorporation of the spiritual and counter-enlightenment content of radical environmentalism into an ideology of integral nationalism (recall German National Socialism's celebration of a mystical connection between the German people and its soil). Eco-fascism is an especially dangerous enemy because it often presents itself as an enemy of multinational capitalism, though in the final analysis it is parasitical upon it.¹² Anarchists are already at the forefront of resistance to far right forces in Europe and North America, and almost alone when it comes to confronting them in the streets. No doubt this aspect of activity will remain a strong priority, now with increased dedication

to pre-empting the far right's attempts to take advantage of growing instability and dissatisfaction.

This leads us directly to the central area of anarchist praxis – direct action. This term refers to action without intermediaries, whereby an individual or a group uses their own power and resources to change reality, according to their own desires. Anarchists understand direct action as a matter of taking social change into one's own hands, by intervening directly in a situation rather than appealing to an external agent (typically a government) for its rectification. Most commonly, direct action is viewed under its preventive or destructive guise. If people object, for instance, to the clear-cutting of a forest, then taking direct action means that rather than petitioning or engaging in a legal process, they would intervene literally to prevent the clear cutting – by chaining themselves to the trees, or pouring sugar into the gas-tanks of the bulldozers, or other acts of disruption and sabotage – their goal being to directly hinder or halt the project.

In addition to environmental defense, we can expect direct action in its destructive or preventive context to become increasingly important in the area of resistance to new technologies. Resistance to new technologies will become more and more significant as institutional responses to ecological crisis center around the irresponsible deployment of nuclear power, biotechnologies, and geo-engineering as fixes for an increasingly destabilizing ecosystem. What should be emphasized in this context is that one need not adopt a comprehensive anti-civilization perspective in order to endorse such actions. In other words, you don't have to be a primitivist to be a Luddite.

In an age of declining fossil fuels and the climate changes perpetrated by their combustion, a new generation of nuclear power stations will almost certainly be pushed forward by government and industry. As mentioned above, the nuclear industry is already massively re-branding itself as a "clean alternative" to oil, coal, and gas, and governments are following suit. Yet nuclear power can only buy time for capitalism and Western overconsumption, at the price of virtually permanent contamination,



Kelly Porter

which seems to be precisely what's happening at Fukushima. While public campaigning and legal measures may have some success in limiting the creation of new nuclear power stations, direct action will no doubt come to the fore as such measures encounter their limitations. Anarchists and their allies will very likely have to intervene to directly hinder construction, and we may well expect a new round of anti-nuclear struggles to emerge very soon as a defining feature of anarchist praxis. This issue is already being given attention at the yearly Climate Camps, first organized in Britain and already being emulated in Germany, Australia, and the United States.¹³

The trenchant world food crisis will also likely result in an institutional push to expand the deployment of genetically modified food, ostensibly as a way of gaining higher yields, but at the price of ecosystem contamination and a further consolidation of corporate power and control over farmers' livelihoods. Anarchist resistance to genetically modified crops already flowered in the 1990s, especially in European countries which, unlike the US, were not as rapidly swept by commercial growing. In solidarity with militant campaigns against GM crops by peasant movements in Latin America

and South Asia, anarchists have played a large part in both campaigning and direct action. "Crop-busting" may well return to the fore of anarchist praxis, even as anti-GM activists promote more sustainable alternatives

Finally, nanotechnology – the direct manipulation of atoms and molecules – is increasingly entering the consciousness of activists as the latest front of technological assault on society and the biosphere. Taking advantage of property changes that occur when substances are reduced to nano-scale dimensions, a host of novel products incorporating them are already on the market.¹⁴ Nanotechnologies are not only an enabling technology that enhances corporate power in all sectors, but also a platform for the potential convergence of biotechnology, computing, and neuroscience as the life/non-life barrier is broken on the atomic scale.

More immediately, initiatives enabled by nanotechnology are among those being forwarded as part of the looming menace of geo-engineering – the intentional, large-scale manipulation of planetary systems to bring about environmental change, particularly to counteract the undesired side effects of other human activities.¹⁵ Among the many proposals

currently being discussed are “fertilizing the oceans” with iron nanoparticles to increase phytoplankton blooms that sequester CO₂, utilizing nano-engineered membranes to store compressed CO₂ in abandoned mines, active oil wells, and sub-oceanic caverns, and blasting sulfate-based aerosols into the stratosphere to deflect sunlight.

Efforts to counter these measures through international law are already taking place. The signatory governments of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), for example, were successfully lobbied in mid-2008 to unanimously agree on a wide-ranging “de-facto moratorium” on ocean fertilization activities. Yet these measures are limited in scope and enforceability – for example, one ocean fertilization company, Climos Inc. of San Francisco, appears to be moving full steam ahead in defiance of international consensus. Hence, direct action may become the only way to prevent dangerous gambling with the stability of planetary systems, the result of the same logic that has already destabilized them to a great degree.

So much for the destructive and preventive aspect of direct action. The term, however, may also signify a constructive and creative enterprise – the self-organized generation of alternatives to capitalism on the ground. These efforts represent utopian experiments in the making, a prefigurative politics aiming to build a new world within the shell of the old. As the writers of the Emergency Exit Collective point out, numerous efforts of this kind are already in existence around the planet – far wider than the efforts of anarchists themselves:

From new forms of direct democracy of indigenous communities like El Alto in Bolivia or self-managed factories in Paraguay, to township movements in South Africa, farming cooperatives in India, squatters’ movements in Korea, experiments in permaculture in Europe or “Islamic economics” among the urban poor in the Middle East. We have seen the development of thousands of forms of mutual aid association...[that] share a common desire to mark a practical break with capitalism, and which, most importantly, hold out the prospect of creating new forms of planetary commons.¹⁶

Through the retrieval of commons, people become increasingly capable of releasing themselves from dependence on capitalism and hollowing it out from within. In the coming years, the creation of self-managed alternatives based on commons will become ever more urgent, as communities face the consequences of declining energy resources and climate change. Indeed, such practices may be our only hope for passing through collapse in a way that will result in liberatory and life-affirming social realities, rather than in nightmares of authoritarianism or wholesale destruction.

For anarchists and their allies, it will become increasingly important to be involved in building independent, sustainable alternatives and community self-sufficiency. The growing interest among anti-capitalists in Permaculture, natural building, and other aspects of practical ecology is an encouraging move in this direction.¹⁷ Constructive direct action in this vein is especially relevant in the advanced capitalist countries, where most anarchists are located, since these are societies in which both community ties and basic skills have been thoroughly eroded. In both urban and rural projects, the combination of self-sufficiency and egalitarian social relations can amount to a powerful form of propaganda by the deed, displaying attractive models which people can implement themselves. Such models offer not only empowerment but also steps towards food and energy security, and towards independence from an increasingly precarious wage labor market with few remaining social safety nets.

This is where the final category of anarchist praxis – networking – comes to the fore. In both their destructive and constructive direct action efforts, anarchists are acting within a much broader social field and their successes will largely depend on solidarity and cooperation with constituencies outside their own core networks. In this context, the cultural logic of networking that has become a central feature of anarchist political praxis can only continue to bear fruit, as anarchists and their allies extend their ties with additional communities in struggle – from migrants and refugees to the crashing middle classes.

This does not mean that anarchists would



position themselves as a vanguard that is supposed to lead the masses towards revolution, but rather that they could function as a rear guard that seeks only to encourage and protect the autonomy and grassroots orientation of emergent resistances. In the context of building a new society, this would entail subverting attempts to absorb local self-reliance into a capitalist and/or authoritarian framework and – if this is successful – defending self-managed communities as they come under various forms of marginalization and attack.

Ultimately, however, there are no guarantees. Anarchist agency will remain necessary under all conditions, even – and perhaps more so – after the collapse of global capitalism. As Noam Chomsky argues, anarchism constitutes “an unending struggle, since progress in achieving a more just society will lead to new insight and understanding of forms of oppression that may be concealed in traditional practice and consciousness.”¹⁸ Even under the most favorable scenario, anarchists will have to respond to the

re-emergence of patterns of domination within and/or among communities, even if at a certain point they have been consciously overcome. Eternal vigilance, to paraphrase Proudhon, will remain the price of liberty. ^(A)

Endnotes

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- 3 Bachram, Heidi (2004) “Climate Fraud and Carbon Colonialism: The new trade in greenhouse gases,” *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 15:4; www.tni.org/archives/bachram/cns.pdf
- 4 Heath, Emily (2010) Nuclear expansion ‘key to combating climate change.’ *Energy World*, 19 Aug. www.energyinst.org/media-relations/media-centre/75

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- 6 Monbiot, Gero (2007) "Eco-Junk," *The Guardian* (July 24); www.monbiot.com/archives/2007/07/24/eco-junk
- 7 Blühdorn, Ingolfur and Ian Welsh, 2007. *Eco-politics Beyond the Paradigm of Sustainability: A Conceptual Framework and Research Agenda. Environmental Politics*, 16 (2), pp. 185-205.
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- 10 Gipfelsoli (2008) "Collapsing the European security architecture"; www.ainfos.ca/08/mar/ainfos00325.html
- 11 Zimmerman, Michael (1997), "Ecofascism – A threat to American environmentalism?" In R. S. Gottlieb (ed.) *The Ecological Community* (London: Routledge), pp. 229-254
- 12 Hammerquist, Don and J. Sakai (2002), *Confronting Fascism: Discussion documents for a militant movement* (Montreal: Kersplebedeb)
- 13 See www.climatecamp.org.uk
- 14 ETC Group (2003) *The Big Down – Technologies converging on the nano scale* (report); www.etcgroup.org/upload/publication/171/01/thebigdown.pdf
- 15 ETC Group (2007) *Gambling with Gaia* (report); http://www.etcgroup.org/en/materials/publications.html?pub_id=606
- 16 Emergency Exit Collective (2008) "The 2008 G-8 in Hokkaido, a Strategic Assessment"; auto-sol.tao.ca/node/3086
- 17 For a useful online gateway see www.permacultureactivist.net
- 18 Chomsky, Noam (1986) "The Soviet Union versus Socialism," *Our Generation* 17.2; www.zmag.org/chomsky/articles/86-soviet-socialism.html

of their safety. Police patrol is thus useless for crime control. Needless to say, no police department has, on the basis of this discovery, discontinued driving-around patrol (with stops for doughnuts). See also Herbert Jacob, *The Frustration of Policy: Police Responses to Crime by American Cities* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Co., 1984).

- 63 I recall the experience of a friend of mine, "Zack Replica" (a pseudonym), my collaborator in Dial-a-Rumor (see Bob Black, "Tales from Dial-a-Rumor," *Friendly Fire* [Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 1992], 71-89). Zack, who is handicapped, lived in Berkeley, California at the same time I did. Zack had been rather sympathetic to the arguments of libertarian psychiatrist Thomas S. Szasz in *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), but one has to have doubts about a psychiatrist whose wife committed suicide. Zack had a belligerent upstairs neighbor, a paranoid schizophrenic who was threatening Zack with violence for no reason. It takes a big bad brave man to threaten somebody in a wheelchair. Zack concluded, if Thomas Szasz thinks mental illness is a myth, he should meet my upstairs neighbor!

Along with a mutual friend, "Cal Crusher," I harassed the neighbor with threatening letters from an imaginary lawyer. This was, in practice, what anarcho-leftists, in theory, call solidarity, direct action, and mutual aid – but which, in practice, they don't practice. We practiced direct action *and* mutual aid. How many of my anarchist enemies can say the same? If I recall, the persecutor committed suicide.

- 64 Black, *Behavior of Law*, 124.

- 65 "It has often been said that the State is as intrusive as it is impotent. It makes a sickly attempt to extend itself over all sorts of things which do not belong to it, or which it grasps only by doing them violence. Thence the expenditure of energy with which the State is reproached and which is truly out of proportion to the results obtained. On the other hand, individuals are no longer subject to any other collective control but the State's, since it is the sole organized collectivity. . . . While the State becomes inflated and hypertrophied in order to obtain a firm enough grip upon individuals, but without succeeding, the latter, without mutual relationships, tumble over one another like so many liquid molecules, encountering no central energy to retain, fix and organize them." Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, ed. George Simpson, tr. John A. Spaulding & George Simpson (New York: The Free Press, 1951), 389.

★ PRESENTING - MICHAEL
MOORCOCKS -
ASTOUNDING
**STARSHIP
STORM
TROOPERS**

★ SEE THE ANARCHISTS
DEFEAT THE AUTHORITARIANS -
★ EXPERIENCE THE GLOW OF
CORRECT THINKING -
★ FEEL THE RATS CRAWL
UP YOUR



STARSHIP STORMTROOPERS

BY MICHAEL MOORCOCK

THERE ARE STILL A FEW THINGS WHICH bring a naïve sense of shocked astonishment to me whenever I experience them – a church service in which the rituals of Dark Age superstitions are performed without any apparent sense of incongruity by the participants – a fat Soviet bureaucrat pontificating about bourgeois decadence – a radical singing the praises of Ayn Rand or Robert Heinlein. If I were sitting in a tube train and all the people opposite me were reading *Mein Kampf* with obvious enjoyment and approval, it probably wouldn't disturb me much more than if they were reading Heinlein, Tolkien, or Richard Adams. All this visionary fiction seems to me to have a great deal in common. Utopian fiction has been predominantly reactionary in one form or another (as well as being predominantly dull) since it began. Most of it warns the world of 'decadence' in its contemporaries and the alternatives are usually authoritarian and sweeping – not to say simple-minded.

Some years ago, I remember reading an article which claimed Robert Heinlein as a revolutionary leftist writer. I'd been confused in the past by listening to hard-line Communists offering views that were somewhat at odds with their anti-authoritarian claims, but I'd never expected to hear similar things from

anarchists. My experience of science fiction fans at the conventions which are held annually in a number of countries (mainly the US and England) had taught me that those who attended were predominantly reactionary (often claiming to be 'apolitical' but somehow always happy to vote Tory), but I had always assumed that these were for one reason or another the exceptions among SF enthusiasts. Then the underground papers began to emerge [in the late sixties] and I found myself in sympathy with most of their attitudes – but once again I saw the old arguments aired: Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Frank Herbert, Isaac Asimov, and the rest, bourgeois reactionaries to a man, Christian apologists, crypto-Stalinists, were being praised by people whose general political ideas I thought I shared. I started writing about what I thought was the implicit authoritarianism of these writers and as often as not found myself accused of being reactionary, elitist, or at very best a rotten spoilsport who couldn't enjoy good SF (ed: science fiction, or, more broadly, speculative fiction) for its own sake. But here I am again, to present arguments which I have presented more than once before – indeed in issue after issue of *New Worlds* [1946-1971; 1976-1996], which the majority of SF fans accused of being insanely radical and

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given to promoting, according to many critics, anarchistic notions of a distasteful nature...

In common with many other periodicals, *New Worlds* believed in revolution. Our emphasis was on fiction, the arts, and sciences, because it was what we knew best. We attacked and were in turn attacked in the all-too-familiar rituals. Smiths refused to continue distributing the magazine unless we 'toned down' our contents. We refused. We were, they said, obscene, blasphemous, nihilistic, etc. etc. A Tory asked a question about us in the House of Commons – why was public money (a small Arts Council grant) being spent on such filth. I recount all this not merely to establish what we were prepared to do to maintain our poli-



cies (we *were* eventually wiped out by Smiths and Menzies in a cynical series of manoeuvres) but to point out that we were the only SF magazine to pursue what you might call a determinedly radical approach – and SF buffs were the first to attack us with genuine vehemence. Our main serial running at the height of our troubles was called *Bug Jack Barron* written by Norman Spinrad, who had taken an active part in radical politics in the US and used his story to display the abuse of democracy and the media in America. He later went on to write a satirical sword-and-sorcery epic, *The Iron Dream*, intended to display the fascist elements inherent in the form. The author of this novel existed, as it were, in an alternate history to our own. His name was Adolf Hitler. The book was meant to point up the number of authors who were, in a sense, 'unsuccessful Hitlers.'

Many other Americans came to use the *NW* as a vehicle because they couldn't get their stories published in the US. Thomas M. Disch, John Sladek, Harvey Jacobs, Harlan Ellison, and many others published a good deal of their best and at the time most controversial work in *NW* – and Heinlein fans actually attacked us for 'destroying' science fiction. Escapism this mainly American form might be, but it posed as a 'literature of ideas,' and that, we contended, it wasn't – unless *The Green Berets* was a profoundly philosophical movie.

Another example: In 1967, Judith Merrill, a founder member of The Science Fiction Writers of America, an ex-Trotskyist turned libertarian, proposed that this organisation would buy advertising space in the SF magazines condemning the war in Vietnam. I was around when this was proposed. A good number of members agreed with alacrity – including English members like myself, John Brunner, Brian Aldiss, etc. Robert Silverberg and Harry Harrison were keen, as were Harlan Ellison, James Blish, and, to be fair, Frank Herbert and Larry Niven. But quite as many were outraged by the idea, saying that the SFWA 'shouldn't interfere in politics.' Okay, said Merrill, then let's say 'The following members of the SFWA condemn American involvement in the Vietnam War etc.' Finally, the SF magazines contained *two* ads – one against the war and one in support of American involvement. Those in support included Poul Anderson, Robert Heinlein, Ann McCaffrey, Daniel F. Galouye, Keith Laumer, and as many other popular SF writers as were against the war. The interesting thing was that at the time many of the pro-US-involvement writers were (and by and large still are) the most popular SF writers in the English speaking world, let alone Japan, the Soviet Union, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, where a good many SF readers think of themselves as radicals. One or two of these writers (British as well as American) are dear friends of mine who are personally kindly and courageous people of considerable integrity – but their political statements (if not always, by any means, their actions) are stomach-turning! Most people have to be judged by their actions

rather than their remarks, which are often surprisingly at odds, but writers, when they are writing, can only be judged on the substance of their work – it is where they have the greatest influence. The majority of SF writers most popular with radicals are by and large crypto-fascists to a man and woman! There is Lovecraft, the misogynic [sic] racist; there is Heinlein, the authoritarian militarist; there is Ayn Rand, the rabid opponent of trade unionism and the left, who, like many a reactionary before her, sees the problems of the world as a failure by capitalists to assume the responsibilities of 'good leadership'; there is Tolkien and that group of middle-class Christian fantasists who constantly sing the praises of bourgeois virtues and whose villains are thinly disguised working class agitators – fear of the Mob permeates their rural romances. To all these and more, the working class is a mindless beast (the Id perhaps) which must be controlled or it will savage the world (i.e. bourgeois security) – the answer is always leadership, 'decency,' paternalism (Heinlein is particularly strong on this), Christian values... What can this stuff have in common with radicals of any persuasion? The simple answer is, perhaps, Romance. The dividing line between rightist Romance (Nazi insignia and myth, etc.) and leftist Romance (insurgent cavalry, etc.) is not always easy to determine. A stirring image is a stirring image and can be employed to raise all sorts of atavistic and infantile emotions in us. Escapist or 'genre' fiction appeals to these emotions. It does no harm to escape from time to time but it can be dangerous to confuse simplified fiction with reality and that, of course, is what propaganda does.

The bandit hero – the underdog rebel – so frequently becomes the political tyrant; and we are perpetually astonished! Such figures appeal to our infantile selves – what is harmful about them in real life is that they are usually immature, without self-discipline, frequently surviving on their 'charm.' Fiction lets them stay like Zorro or Robin Hood, perpetually charming. In reality they become petulant, childish, relying on a mixture of threats and self-pitying pleading – like any baby. These are

too often the revolutionary figures on whom we pin our hopes, to whom we sometimes commit our lives, and whom we sometimes try to be, because we fail to distinguish fact from fiction. In reality, it is too often the small, fanatical men with the faces and stance of neurotic clerks who come to power, while the charismatic heroes, if they are lucky, die gloriously, leaving us to discover that while we have been following them, imitating them, a new Tsar has manipulated himself into the position of power and Terror has returned with a vengeance while we have been using all our energies living a romantic life. Heroes betray us. By having them in real life, we betray ourselves. The heroes of Heinlein and Ayn Rand are forever competent, forever right: they are oracles and protectors, magic parents (so long as we obey their rules). They are prepared to accept the responsibilities we would rather not bear. They are 'leaders.' Traditional SF is hero fiction on huge scales, but it is only when it poses as a fiction of ideas that it becomes pernicious. At its most spectacular, it gives us Charlie Manson and Scientology. To enjoy it is one thing. To claim it as 'radical' is quite another. It is rather unimaginative; it is usually badly written; its characters are ciphers; its propaganda is simpleminded and conservative – good old-fashioned opium which might be specifically designed for dealing with the potential revolutionary, dealing with the society this stuff works so hard to protect.

In a writer like Lovecraft, a terror of sex often combines (or is confused for) a terror of the masses, the 'ugly' crowd. But this is so common to so much 'horror' fiction that it's hardly worth discussing. Lovecraft is morbid and equates to that negative romanticism found in much Nazi art. He was a confused anti-semitic and misanthrope, a promoter of anti-rationalist ideas about racial 'instinct' and so on. A dedicated supporter of 'Aryanism' and conservatism, a hater of women, he wound up marrying a Jewess (which might or might not have been a sign of hope – we haven't her view on the matter). Lovecraft appeals to us primarily when we are feeling morbid ourselves but apart from his offensively awful writing and

a resultant inability to describe his horrors (leaving us to do the work – the secret of his success – we're all better writers than he is!) he is rarely as frightening, by implication, as most of the other highly popular writers whose concerns are not with 'meeping Things' but with idealised versions of society. It's not such a big step, for instance, from Farnham's Freehold to Hitler's Lebensraum.

I must admit I'm not describing the books I mention or following a properly argued critical line. I'm arguing on the assumption that my readers are at least familiar with some of the books and authors I mention. I would not be attacking these books if they were not the favourite reading of so many radicals. Georgette Heyer, Agatha Christie, and the rest are read pretty much entirely by the bourgeoisie; we take for granted that they promote certain assumptions about society. Nor am I attacking the books for their superficial fascination with quasi-mediaeval social systems (a la Frank Herbert). Fiction about kings and queens is not necessarily royalist fiction any more than fiction about anarchists is likely to be libertarian fiction. As a writer, I have produced a good many fantastic romances in which kings and queens, lords and ladies, figure largely – yet I am an avowed anti-monarchist. *Catch-22* never seemed to me in favour of militarism. And just because many of Heinlein's characters are soldiers or ex-soldiers I don't automatically assume he must therefore be in favour of war. It depends on what use you make of such characters in a story and what, in the final analysis, you are saying.

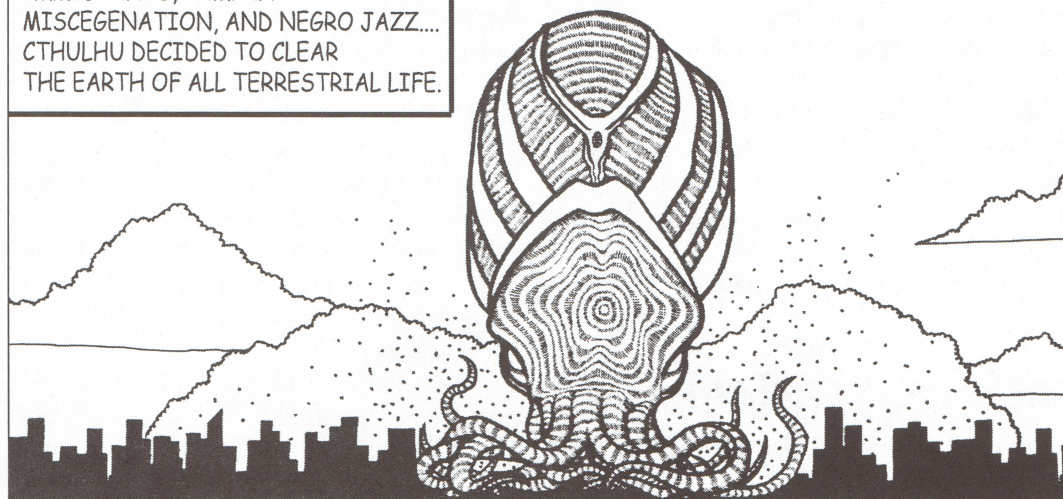
Jules Verne in *The Masterless Man* [1909] put some pretty decent sentiments in the mouth of Kaw-djer the anarchist, and his best characters, like Captain Nemo, are embittered 'rebels' who have retreated from society. Even the aerial anarchists of *The Angel of Revolution* [1893] by George Griffiths have something to be said for them, for all their inherent authoritarianism, but they are essentially romantic 'outlaws' and the views they express are not sophisticated even by the standards of the 1890s.

H. G. Wells was no more the 'father' of science fiction than Jules Verne. He inherited a

tradition going back some thirty or forty years in the form he himself used and several centuries [prior] in the form of Utopian romance. What was unusual about Wells, however, is that he was one of the first radicals of his time to take the trappings of the scientific romance and combine them with powerful and telling *images* to make Bunyanesque allegories like *The Time Machine* [1895] or *The Invisible Man* [1897]. Wells didn't have his characters talking socialism. He showed the results of capitalism, authoritarianism, superstition, and other evils, and because he was a far better writer than most of those who have ever written SF before or since, [and] he made his points with considerable clarity. Wells took the techniques of Kipling and preached his own brand of socialism. Until Wells – the most talented, original, and intelligent writer of his kind – almost all SF had devoted itself to attacks on 'decadence' and military unpreparedness, urging our leaders to take a stronger moral line and our armies to re-equip and get better officers. By and large, this was the tone of much of the SF which followed Wells, from Kipling's effective but reactionary *With the Night Mail* and *As Easy as ABC* (paternalistic aerial controllers whose rays pacify 'the mob') to stories by John Buchan, Michael Arlen, William Le Quex, E. Phillips Oppenheim, and hundreds of others who predominantly were following Kipling, warning us of the dangers of socialism, mixed marriages, free love, anarchist plots, Zionist conspiracies, the yellow peril, and so on, and so on. Even Jack London wasn't what one might call an all-round libertarian any more than Wells was when he toyed with his ideas of an elite corps of 'samurai' who were actually not a great deal different to how Soviet Communist Party members saw themselves, or were described in official fiction and propaganda. The quasi-religious nature of SF (which I describe in a collection of pre-WWI SF *Before Armageddon* [1975]) was producing on the whole quasi-religious substitutes (a variety of 'scientologists' and authoritarian socialist and fascist theories). A few attacked the theories of the emerging dictators (Murray Constantine's *Swastika Night*, 1937, seems to think that

APPALLED AT THE INFLUX OF IMMIGRANTS, RAMPANT MISCEGENATION, AND NEGRO JAZZ.... CTHULHU DECIDED TO CLEAR THE EARTH OF ALL TERRESTRIAL LIFE.

John Henri



Christianity could conquer Hitler but is otherwise a pretty incisive projection of Nazism several hundred years in the future), but by and large the world we got in the thirties was the world the SF writers of the day hoped we would have – ‘strong leaders’ reshaping nations. The reality of these hero-leaders was not, of course, entirely what had been visualised – Nuremberg rallies and Strength Through Joy, perhaps – but Kristallnacht and gas ovens seemed to be a bit over the mark.

At least the American pulp magazines like *Amazing Stories* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories* were not offering us high-profile ‘leadership’ – they just gave us the good old-fashioned mixture of implicit racialism/militarism/nationalism/paternalism carried a few hundred years into the future or a few million light years into space (E. E. Smith remains to this day one of the most popular writers of that era). John W. Campbell, who in the late thirties took over *Astounding Science Fiction Stories* and created what many believe to be a major revolution in the development of SF, was the chief creator of the school known to buffs as ‘Golden Age’ SF and produced by the likes of Heinlein, Asimov, and A. E. Van Vogt – wild eyed paternalists to a man, fierce anti-socialists, good Americans (though only Heinlein was actually born there) whose conservatism reflected

the deep-seated conservatism of the majority of Americans, who saw a Bolshevik menace in every union meeting and believed, in common with authoritarians everywhere, that any radical wanted to take over old-fashioned political power, turning the world into a uniform mass of ‘workers’ with themselves (the radicals) as commissars. They offered us such visions, when they made any overt discussion of politics at all. They were about as left-wing as *The National Enquirer* or *The Saturday Evening Post* (where their stories eventually, and occasionally, were to appear). They were xenophobic, smug, and confident that the capitalist system would flourish throughout the universe, thought they were, of course, against dictators and the worst sort of exploiters (no longer Jews but often still ‘aliens’). Rugged individualism was the most sophisticated political concept they could manage – in the pulp tradition, the Code of the West became the Code of the Space Frontier, and a spaceship captain had to do what a spaceship captain had to do...

The war helped. It provided character types and a good deal of authoritative sounding technological terms which could be applied to scientific hardware and social problems alike and sounded reassuringly ‘expert.’ Those chaps had the tone of Vietnam twenty years earlier, and indeed, it’s often been suggested

that SF supplied a lot of the terms and atmosphere for American military and space technology. *Astounding* became full of crew-cut wisecracking, cigar-chewing, competent guys (like Campbell's image of himself) of the kind often seen in John Ford/John Wayne movies. Nothing much wrong with that, really. Who doesn't enjoy a Ford Western? But Campbell and his writers (and they considered themselves something of a unified *team*) were not producing Westerns. They claimed to be pro-

An anarchist is not a wild child... he does not assume 'rebellious charm' in order to placate authority, which is in essence what the rebel heroes of all these genre stories do

ducing a fiction of ideas. These competent guys were suggesting how the world should be run. By the early fifties, *Astounding* had turned, by almost anyone's standard, into a cypto-fascist, deeply philistine magazine quite as horrifying as any midwest newspaper of the period but pretending to intellectualism and offering idealistic kids an 'alternative' that was, of course, no alternative at all. Through the fifties, Campbell used his whole magazine as propaganda for the ideas he promoted in his editorials. His writers, by and large, were enthusiastic. Those who were not fell away from him, disturbed by his increasingly messianic disposition (Alfred Bester gives a good account of this). Over the years, Campbell promoted the mystical, quasi-scientific Scientology (first proposed by one of his regular writers, L. Ron Hubbard, and aired for the first time in *Astounding* as 'Dianetics: The New Science of the Mind'), a perpetual motion machine known as the 'Dean Drive,' a series of plans to ensure that the highways weren't 'abused,' and dozens of other half-baked notions, all in the context of cold war thinking. He also, when

faced with the Watts riots of the mid-sixties, seriously proposed and went on to proposing that there were 'natural' slaves who were unhappy when freed. I sat on a panel with him in 1965, as he pointed out that the worker bee when unable to work dies of misery, that the moujiks when freed went to their masters and begged to be enslaved again, that the ideals of the anti-slavers who fought the Civil War were merely expressions of self-interest and that the blacks were 'against' emancipation, which was fundamentally why they were indulging in 'leaderless' riots in the suburbs of Los Angeles! I was speechless (actually I said five words in all – 'science fiction' – 'psychology' – 'Jesus Christ!' – before I collapsed), leaving John Brunner to do an excellent job of cool demolition of Campbell's arguments, which left the editor calling on God in support of his views – an experience rather more intense for me than watching *Doctor Strangelove* at the cinema.

Starship Troopers [1959] (serialised in *Astounding* as was most of Heinlein's fiction until the early sixties) was probably Heinlein's last 'straight' SF serial for Campbell before he began his 'serious' books such as *Farnham's Freehold* [1964] and *Stranger in a Strange Land* [1961] – taking the simplified characters of genre fiction and producing some of the most ludicrously unlikely people ever to appear in print. In *Starship Troopers*, we find a slightly rebellious cadet gradually learning that wars are inevitable, that the army is always right, that his duty is to obey the rules and protect the human race against the alien menace. It is pure debased Ford out of Kipling, and it set the pattern for Heinlein's more ambitious paternalistic, xenophobic (but equally sentimental) stories which became for me steadily more hilarious until I realised with some surprise that people were taking them as seriously as they had taken, say, *Atlas Shrugged* a generation before – in the hundreds of thousands! That middle-America could regard such stuff as 'radical' was easy enough to understand – but I kept finding that supporters of the Angry Brigade were enthusiastic about Heinlein, that people with whom I thought I shared libertarian principles were also getting

off on every paternalist, bourgeois writer who had ever given me the creeps! I still can't fully understand it. Certainly, I can't doubt the sincerity of their idealism. But how does it equate with their celebration of writers like Tolkien and Heinlein? The clue would be in the very vagueness of the prose, which allows for liberal interpretation; it could be that the ciphers they use instead of characters are capable of suggesting a wholly different meaning to certain readers. To me, their naïve and emblematic reading of society is fundamentally misanthropic and therefore anti-libertarian. We are faced, once again, with quasi-religion, presented to us as radicalism. At best, it is the philosophy of the Western applied to the complex social problems of the twentieth century – it is Reaganism, it is John Wayne in *Big John Maclean* and *The Green Berets*, it is George Wallace and Joe McCarthy – at its most refined in William F. Buckley, Jr., who is already a long way more sophisticated than Heinlein and is still pretty simple-minded.

Rugged individualism also goes hand in hand with a strong faith in paternalism – albeit a tolerant and somewhat distant paternalism – and many otherwise sharp-witted libertarians seem to see nothing in the morality of a John Wayne Western to conflict with their views. Heinlein's paternalism is at heart the same as Wayne's, and in the final analysis it is a kind of easy-going militarism favoured by the veteran professional soldier – the chain of command is complex – many adult responsibilities can be left to that chain as long as broad, but firmly enforced, rules from 'high up' are adhered to. Heinlein is Eisenhower Man, and his views seem to me to be more pernicious than the ordinary infantile back-to-the-land Christian communism, with its mysticism and its hatred of technology. To be an anarchist, surely, is to reject authority but to accept self-discipline and community responsibility. To be a rugged individualist à la Heinlein and others is to be forever a child who must obey, charm, and cajole to be tolerated by some benign, omniscient father: Rooster Coburn shuffling his feet in front of the judge he respects for his office (but not necessarily himself) in *True Grit*.

An anarchist is not a wild child, but a mature, realistic adult who imposes laws upon himself and modifies them according to his experience of life, his interpretation of the world. He is a 'rebel,' certainly, but he does not assume 'rebellious charm' in order to placate authority, which is in essence what the rebel heroes of all of these genre stories do. There always comes the depressing point where Robin Hood doffs a respectful cap to King Richard, having clobbered the rival king. This sort of implicit paternalism is seen in high relief in the currently popular *Star Wars*, which also promotes a somewhat disturbing anti-rationalism in its quasi-religious 'Force' which unites Jedi Knights (are we back to Wellsian 'samurai' again?) and upon whose power they can draw, like some holy brotherhood, some band of Knights Templar. *Star Wars* is a pure example of the genre (in that it is a compendium of other people's ideas) in its implicit structure – quasi-children fighting for a paternalistic (or maternalistic) authority who win through in the end and are praised, standing bashfully before the princess while medals are placed around their necks. They might as well be nooses.

Star Wars carries the characteristic paternalistic messages of almost all generic adventure fiction (may the Force never arrive on your doorstep at three o'clock in the morning) and has all the right characters. It raises 'instinct' above reason (a fundamental Nazi doctrine) and promotes a kind of sentimental romanticism attractive to the young and idealistic and protective of existing institutions. It is the essence of a *genre* that it will continue to promote certain implicit ideas even if the author is unconscious of them. In this case, the audience also seems unconscious of them.

It was Alfred Bester who first attracted me to science fiction as such. I'd read some fantasy and Edgar Rice Burroughs before that, but I thought that if *The Stars My Destination* (also called *Tiger! Tiger!*) [1956] was SF, then this was the fiction for me. It took me some years to realise that Bester was one of the few exceptions. At the ending of *The Stars My Destination*, the self-educated, working-class,

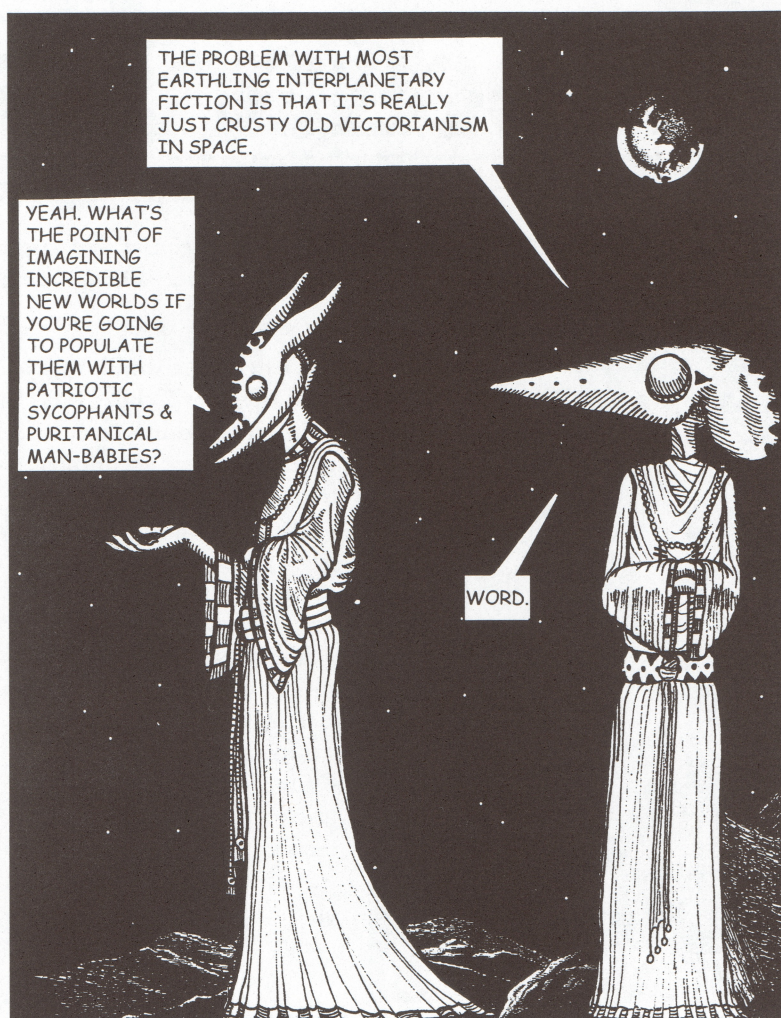
'scum of the spaceways,' Gully Foyle, comes into possession of the substance known as PyrE, capable of detonating at a *thought* and probably destroying the solar system at very least. The plot revolved around the attempts of various powerful people to get hold of the stuff. Foyle has it. Various moral arguments or forceful persuasions are brought against him to make him give the stuff up to a 'responsible' agency. In the end, he scatters the stuff to 'the mob' of the solar system. Here you are, he says, it's yours. It's your destiny. Do with it how you see fit.

This is one of the very, very few 'libertarian' SF novels I have ever read. That is was the first, and turned me on to reading SF is probably the purest accident. If I hadn't read it, I very much doubt I should have read any more SF. It's a wonderful adventure story. It has a hero developing from a completely stupefied, illiterate hand on a spaceship to a brilliant and mature individual taking his revenge first on those who have harmed him and then gradually developing what you might call a 'political conscience.' I know of no other SF book which so thoroughly combines romance with an idealism almost wholly acceptable to me, and it is probably significant that it enjoys only a relatively small success compared to, say, *Stranger in a Strange Land*.

Leaving aside the very worthy but to my mind dull and journalistic *The Dispossessed* [1974] by U. K. LeGuin, and leaving aside my own books – which I should like to think speak for the same ideas of liberty and self-reliance and mutual cooperation that Bester speaks for – it is quite hard for me to find many other examples of SF books which, as it were, 'promote' libertarian ideas. M. John Harrison is an anarchist and his books are full of anarchists – some of them very bizarre, like the anarchist-aesthetes of *The Centauri Device* [1975]. Typical of the *New Worlds* school, he could be described as an existential anarchist. There is Brian Aldiss, with his *Barefoot in the Head* [1969] version of an LSD 'bombed' Europe almost totally liberated and developing bizarre new customs. There are J. G. Ballard's 'terminal ironies' such as *The Atrocity*

Exhibition [1970] and *Crash* [1973], and so on, which have brought criticisms of 'nihilism' against him. So little SF has fundamental humanitarian values, let alone libertarian ones, that one is hard put to find other examples. My own taste, I suppose, is somewhat at odds with my political views. I admire Barrington J. Bayley, whose stories are often extremely abstract. One of the most enjoyable recently published is *The Soul of the Robot* [1974], which discusses the nature of individual identity. Charles L. Harness is another favourite of mine. *The Rose* [1966], in particular, lacks the simplifications of most SF, and *The Paradox Men* [1955], with its sense of the nature of Time, its thief hero, and its ironic references to America Imperial, is highly entertaining. I also have a soft spot for C. M. Kornbluth, who to my mind had a rather stronger political conscience than he allowed himself, so that his stories are sometimes confused as he tried to mesh middle-American ideas with his own radicalism. One of my favourites (though structurally it is a bit weak) is *The Syndic* [1953] (about a society where a rather benign mafia is paramount). Fritz Leiber is probably the best of all the American SF writers for his prose-style, his wit, and his humanity, as well as his abiding contempt for authoritarianism, and *Gather, Darkness* [1943] is one of the best SF books to relate political power to religious power (to be fair, this was also serialised in *Astounding* during the forties). John Brunner, who wrote the CND marching song 'H-Bomb's Thunder,' often writes from a distinctly socialist point of view. Harry Harrison wrote a send-up of Heinlein which I found very funny, *Bill, the Galactic Hero* [1965]. Harlan Ellison, who for some time belonged to a New York street gang and who has identified himself for many years with radicalism in the US, writes many short stories whose heroes have no truck with authority of any sort, though the conventions of the genre sometimes get in the way of the essential messages of his stories. This has to be true of most genre fiction. Ellison's best work is written outside the SF genre. Although I find *Illuminatus!* [Trilogy, 1975] a bit 'ordinary' myself, seeming to be a noisy

compendium of rather conventional imaginative ideas, a great many people have enjoyed it. To my mind, one of the best examples of imaginative fiction to appear in England since the war is Maurice Richardson's *The Exploits of Engelbrecht* [1950]. These 'Chronicles of the Surrealists Sportsman's Club' are superbly laconic pieces, concentrating more original invention into fewer words than almost any writer I can think of. They outshine, for me, almost anything else remotely like them, including the stories of Borges and other much admired imaginative writers. Borges tends to make a meal of one idea (something, at least, you can't say of Van Vogt), whereas Richardson goes swiftly through one to the next, using a beautifully disciplined prose. He has the advantage of being a great ironist, and I find that the more ironic humour any book contains, the more palatable it is. There is often an element of self-mockery in a good ironic style which will make it for me essentially enjoyable, whatever the subject matter or ostensible 'message' of the text. Yet such style, controlled in a particular way, can become one of the most convincing weapons in the literary arsenal, and it often astonishes me how cleverly Kipling influenced generations of writers by disguising his romantic-imperialist notions behind that superb matter-of-fact ironic prose, using it to give dignity to sometimes quite bloodthirsty authoritarian ideas. Many writers, not necessarily of Kipling's views, have used it since. We find a debased version of it in the right-wing thrillers and SF novels of our own day, and it is probably more than anything else this 'tone' employed to suggest the writer's basic decency and commonsense which enable many people to accept ideas which, couched differently, would revolt them. What Heinlein or Ayn Rand or Tolkien, for instance, all lack is any trace of self-mockery. They are nature's urbane Tories. They'll put an arm round your shoulder and tell you that their ideas are quite radical too, really; that they used to be fire-eaters in their youth; that there are different ways of achieving social change; that you must be realistic and pragmatic. Next time you pick up a Heinlein book, think of the author as looking



John Henri

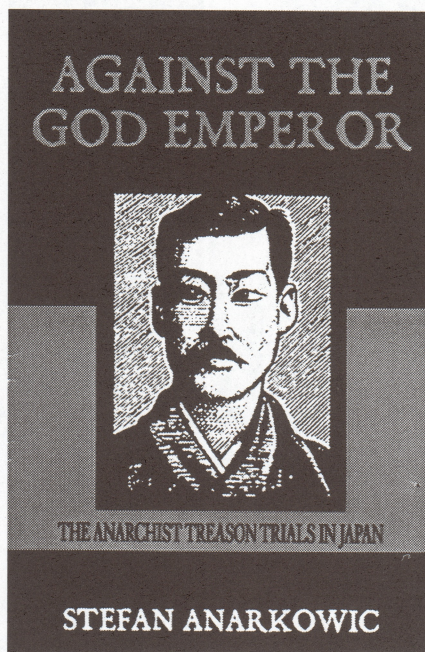
a bit like General Eisenhower, or, if that image isn't immediate enough, some chap in early middle-age, good-looking in a slightly soft square-jawed sort of way, with silver at the temples, a blue tie, a sober three-pieced suit, telling you with a quiet smile that Margaret Thatcher cares for individualism and opportunity above all things, as passionately in her way as you do in yours. And then you might have some idea of what you're actually about to read. (A)

Media Reviews

Reviews by Arlian [A], Lawrence Jarach [LJ], and Paul E Wogg [PEW]

Anarchy does exchanges with anarchist and anti-state, anti-capitalist periodicals.

We try to review all such periodicals recieved, so send them to us.

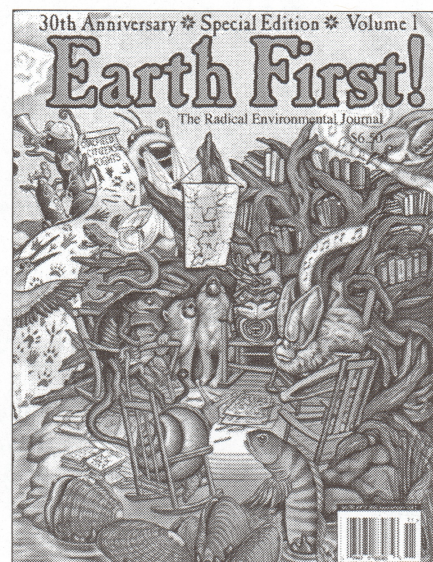


Against the God Emperor

Stefan Anarkowic
Black Powder Press
PO Box 1613
Santa Cruz, CA 95061
\$3.50

I ADMIT I HAVE A PET PEEVE. I wish, oh how I wish, that anarchist literary projects contained brief introductions! So very many confusing and annoying things could be cleared up with a few short explanatory paragraphs. This zine is a great example. While the author's name is obviously a pseudonym, a name with a so-called foreign origin might suggest that the author is neither a native nor a fluent English speaker. Well, that and the atrocious English. One

can't help but wonder if *Against the God Emperor's* choppiness is due to poor translation or because English is the author's second (or third, or fourth) language? While poor English or bad translations could be forgiven, genuine carelessness really can't be. It's unclear whether Stefan has little or no understanding of the Japanese language, or if his English is so poor he is simply unable to discern inconsistencies in his transcription of Japanese words. Example: the famed anarchist Osugi Sakae has his name rendered in two ways, sometimes in the aforementioned style (which is correct) and sometimes as Osugi Sakai. Continuing on the issue of names, the author never mentions whether he renders them in Japanese style (family name first, given name last) or European style. This issue is most noticeable when referring to the man called Museifu Kyosan. Museifu means Anarchy or Anarchist, while -san is actually an honorific suffix usually applied to a person's family name and not likely part of this person's given name at all. Possibly I'm just being a petty Japanophile. Regardless of all my criticisms (and I have more), this zine is still one of the far-too-few written on the long-neglected topic of Japanese anarchism. However, if this is a subject that interests you, I recommend you skip this and try and track down *Museifushugi: A Brief History of Anarchism in Pre War Japan* produced by Libertarian Press. Or better yet, try *Reflections on the Way to the Gallows: Rebel Women in Prewar Japan* translated and edited by Mikiso Hane. [A]



Earth First! Journal

30th Anniversary Issue, Volume 1

PO Box 964
Lake Worth, FL 33460
\$6.50

WHETHER YOU FIND THEM inspirational or embarrassing, there's no denying that Earth First! is one of the most visible anarchist-affiliated groups in the current milieu, and for any formalized tendency – let alone one whose mission is paradigmatic for the state's definition of domestic terrorism – to survive for thirty years is certainly nothing to sneeze at. Making snarky snipes about these most earnest of ecocritics is like shooting fish in a barrel (a practice long opposed for its unsustainability), but at this point I'm more interested in analyzing social movements like EF! – and deep ecology as a whole – through the

lens of religious analysis, exploring the material and psychological forces that undergird and animate this intersection of spirituality and activism. That said, there's still plenty of snicker-inducing material here for those of us whose sense of irony outweighs our desire for emotional solace via a re-enchantment of First Nature, from headlines such as "Down With The Bourgeoisie, Up With Grizzly" to – and I'm cringing while typing this – a sidebar with the lyrics and chord changes for "The FBI Stole My Fiddle." It was interesting to see the multiple layers of signification at work in *EF! Journal*: while this is certainly intended for a wide audience, numerous personal references and in-jokes make it clear this is also the communication organ for a tight-knit, if globally dispersed, social group, and this warmth and sense of camaraderie continues to endow this publication with a rather unique voice. An absolutely massive anthology of both new and classic *Earth First!* articles, this first of two special issues is sure to delight long-time readers and would make an excellent introduction for someone coming across this band of radical environmentalists for the first time. [PEW]

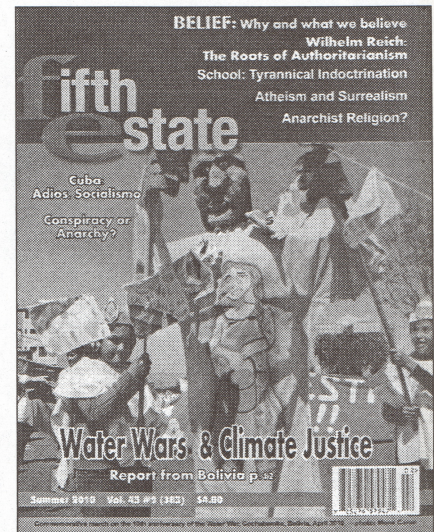
Black Flag

Issue 233 (Mid 2011)

BM Hurricane
London WC1N 3XX
England
£3.

A WELL-MADE, VERY PROFESSIONAL-looking glossy magazine from the UK, *Black Flag* represents a populist, class-struggle take on anarchism, with a range of historical pieces alongside a very mass-movement focus on contemporary state politics. While I enjoyed some of the journalistic work here, the self-aggrandizing writing style made it hard to take very seriously; every article feels like yet another excuse to expound the anarchist

platform (and yes, there is only one, in case you'd forgotten). To paraphrase an excessively sarcastic comrade who borrowed my review copy, you know an article on contemporary rioting is going to be relevant when the only people it quotes are Negri and Bakunin, and indeed this magazine returns time and time again to the infamous Dead White Men of the anarchist canon. The interview with Atari Teenage Riot – who I've personally never paid much attention to – reads like a promotional item, and aside from a single reference to anti-austerity actions on the part of the interviewer could have appeared in any mainstream music rag trying to feature something *edgy*. I must admit that I had a good chuckle at their exposé on the infamous Marxist party rag, as *BF* looks and feels more like the *Socialist Worker* issues I enjoyed as a youth than any other anarchist periodical I've come across (headlines like "Is this only the beginning?" probably don't help). [PEW]



Fifth Estate

Vol. 45, No.2, Summer 2010

PO Box 201016

Ferndale MI 48220

\$5 per issue/\$14 per year

A NOTHER ENTRY FROM THE incredibly long-running anti-authoritarian periodical, I found myself alternatively intrigued and underwhelmed while reading this particular manifestation. There is some interesting subject matter and solid enough writing throughout, but only a couple of articles commanded my attention beyond a quick scan. The issue at hand is split between updates and reportbacks related to global activism and radical politics — the myth of Cuban "Socialism" and battles over water rights in Bolivia, among others — and articles geared more towards philosophy, psychology, and literary criticism. William Reich and his analysis of fascism and social organization are one loose theme of the issue, with related pieces on education. I found the Dupont-penned article to be a highlight (surprise, surprise) and the light-hearted piece on the relationship between conspiracy theorists and anarchists is perhaps the best I've read on the topic. Peter Lamborn Wilson contributes a quick essay on anarchist

approaches to religion (and, more specifically, polytheism), fertile territory which unfortunately descends all too quickly into a mucky quasi-endorsement of contemporary New Age spirituality that borders dangerously on self-parody. I can't quite place the source of my disappointment with *Fifth Estate*, but I suppose this ultimately felt like it suffered from the reign of More of the Same. [PEW]

Memory as a Weapon

(Puget Sound Anarchists, 2011)
pugetsoundanarchists.org/node/25

A BRIEF EXPLORATION OF THE role of recollection – in both a personal and social/collective sense – within revolutionary activity as well as psychology, this piece was originally printed in the Chilean anarchist periodical *Germen*. *Memory as a Weapon* sits halfway between theory and poetry, a style that suits the ethereal subject matter quite well. Focusing upon the notion of an “insurrectionary memory” and dedicated to the three young people who died in confrontations with the police, this zine is hardly mind-blowing – its content essentially boils down to an application of the old cliché “those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it” in the context of anarchist struggle – but the abstract, hauntingly metaphysical tone makes it a worthwhile, if somewhat anti-climactic, read. [PEW]

The Rag: Anarcha-Feminist Magazine #4

PO Box 10785
Dublin 1
Ireland
www.ragdublin.blogspot.com
 no price listed

IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING, it stands for the Revolutionary Anarcha-Feminist Group, but of course the extra layers of pun should be obvious. This is a substantial journal

(50 pages), packed with an anarchist gloss on a host of topics that should be familiar to anyone with even a passing interest in feminism: women and the environment, sexist advertising, reproductive issues (including a survey of the violence visited upon clinics), health (one of the longest and most informative articles on genital warts I've ever seen outside a medical journal!), sex work and trafficking, female rap and punk, radical parenting, and tobacco. More specific challenges for women interested in revolutionary liberation confront the writers and commentators at *The Rag* due to Ireland being a seriously Catholic country. Examples: the trouble with the clergy and sexual abuse (rampant everywhere there are priests, but especially bad in Ireland; the fact that trans people are not legally permitted to change their gender; non-prescription contraceptives only became available in 1992; homosexuality was illegal until 1993; divorce was illegal until 1995; “immoral” women (those who had sex before marriage or who had a child without being married) were still committed until the 1980s. While the focus on these legislative questions is not usually on any anarchist agenda, it is important to pay



attention to the socio-political climate our allies operate in outside the Freest Country in the World. A nice personal touch missing from almost all other print media is the last several pages of recommendations from the women who work on the journal; food, music, books and authors, and other things they appreciate. [LJ]

Steel City Revolt! A Pittsburgh Anarchist Magazine #6 (Winter 2011)

PO Box 90125
Pittsburgh PA 15224
\$4/\$8 per year

A GLOSSY COVER AND EARNEST innards make this 24-page periodical a tolerable read. Locally focused, there are still some interesting articles with perspectives that are still possibly relevant for folks not around their area; the two on dealing with cops (as perpetrators of nastiness on poor and working class people and on not involving them in trying to help people who've been harassed and/or assaulted for being gender non-conformists) and one on being “Riot Ready.” While the problems of manufacturing jobs in the steel industry dwindle, the survey of labor issues relies far too heavily on existing bureaucratic union structures

as a filter of both information and action. The dismal – if not objectively counter-revolutionary – prospects for such a defensive tactical decision should be clear to anyone familiar with the traditional anarchist discourse (even among syndicalists) on labor unions, but that seems to have gone unfortunately unnoticed by the folks at *SCR!* The last page is dedicated to marking anniversaries of people and events related to anarchism; as a lover of history, I applaud this regular feature. [LJ]

troploin newsletter #6

December 2008

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL AUTONOMY

It is very difficult to force into obedience whoever has no wish to command.
— J.-J. Rousseau

No critique beyond this point

Any critique of democracy arouses suspicion, and even more so if this critique is made by those who wish for a world without capital and wage-labour, without classes, without a State.

Public opinion dislikes but understands those who despise democracy from a reactionary or elitist point of view. Someone who denies the common man's or woman's ability to organize and run his or her own life will logically oppose democracy, that someone who firmly believes in this ability, and yet regards democracy as unfit for human emancipation, is doomed to the censure of theory. At best, he is looked down upon as an idiot; at the worst, he gets the reputation of a warped mind destined to end up in the poor company of the arch-enemies of democracy: the fascists.

Indeed, if "the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves", it seems obvious that in order to emancipate themselves, the exploited must do so with power structures that ensure them, i.e. create their own organs of debating and decision-making. Exercising one's collective freedom, isn't that what democracy is all about...? That assumption has the merit of simplicity: to change the world and live the best possible human life, what better way than to "use this life as institutions that will provide the greatest number of people with the greatest freedom of speech and decision-making"? Besides, whenever they fight, the dominated masses generally declare their will to establish the authentic democracy that's been lacking so far.

For all these reasons, the critique of democracy is a lost or forgotten battle.

images of party machinery, the means for leadership to communicate with the rank-and-file of political movements. It was therefore with much pleasure and surprise that I came across these two missives from the Troploin group, learning as I did that they are in fact interested in dissecting the organizational apparatus itself, embracing anti-authoritarian communism by analyzing the contradictory nature of political reasoning. I went on to learn that Troploin is led by, among others, the French theorist Gilles Dauvé, and the second of these two newsletters, though uncredited here, is in fact an essay written by him. The first, "Questions and Answers" is an interview of collective members by the German *Revolutionary Times*. Though the interview contains many interesting points, it also makes for a rather difficult introduction to the already hard-to-pin-down collective because it focuses on very specific issues rather than asking for a basic thrust of Troploin's critique. Then again, it's not clear that there is a singular perspective they are advancing, other than a commitment to using Marxian methodology (often contra Marx) to analyze material and social relationships under capitalism. I suppose that's what it's all about?

Dauvé's examination of democracy is a good deal more rewarding for first-time readers, carefully dismantling the prejudices and assumptions that philosophers routinely use to ground democratic rule as the end-goal of political activity. The essay is quite historical in scope, looking at the notion from its origins in ancient Greece to its adaptation by various modern thinkers and ideological tendencies, both reactionary and radical. This is, to be sure, a negative criticism, providing little in terms of a program for alternatives to democratic rule, but this can hardly be held against it; the purpose of such a genealogy is, of course, to provide fissures in the dominant forms of thought, to

open up other fields of inquiry which might, if at first appearing as dangerous, even unthinkable, ultimately prove to be all the more appealing. What really gets me excited about this piece is its own self-awareness: when a critique of democracy contains the phrase "the critique of democracy is a lost or forgotten battle" on the first page, one can rest assured we're moving beyond the pedantic sophistry of mass politics and into more rewarding territory.

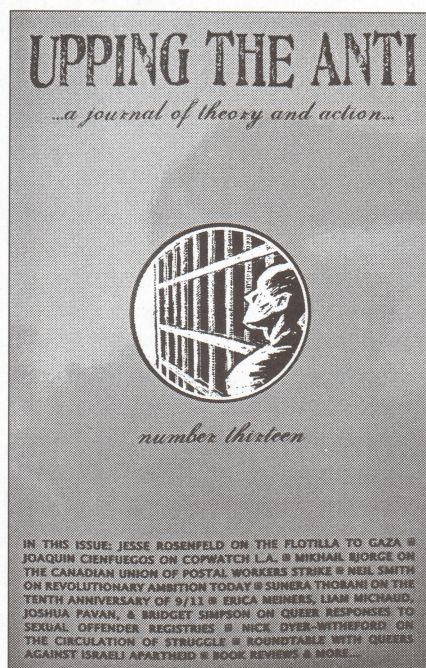
I must admit to a certain charmed amusement to see Dauvé set aside a single, short paragraph to dismiss "the anarchistic critique," but then he goes on to represent it in terms that are just *soooooo* nineteenth century. Get with the times, guy; at least some of us speak of desiring more complicated things than to "disperse power evenly." Aside from that minor snub, one can't help but be impressed by the scope of the research here, and the authors do an excellent job of framing the question of democracy across multiple eras of political thinking. Equally impressive is the writing itself: though originally written in French, the translation does a great job of capturing the piece's deliciously banal tone and dry, obsequious sense humor; if all radical theory was this intelligently entertaining, perhaps I wouldn't be so sour on consciousness-raising! But I digress. In all seriousness, though, the Troploin tendency has gotten its hooks into me with these newsletters, and I can't wait to alienate more friends within the movement by pointing out the totalitarian underpinnings of their supposedly horizontalist organizing models ... teehee! [PEW]

Troploin Newsletter #4 "What's It All About? Questions and Answers"

Troploin Newsletter #6 "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Autonomy"

c/o ARHEDIS
BP 20306
60203 Compiègne Cedex
France
no price listed

I'LL COME RIGHT OUT AND SAY IT: political "newsletters" weird me out. It's the anti-organizationalist in me (and, no doubt, the embarrassed ex-Leninist) that finds the concept so loathsome, conjuring up as it does



Upping the Anti:

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998 Bloor St W. P O Box 10571

Toronto ON M6H 4H9

Canada

\$10 per issue/\$20 (CDN);

\$32 (USD) per year

THE LAST ISSUE OF *UTA* contained probably the most interesting piece I've ever read in the journal. It is a thorough demolition of the shitty book-length rant **The Vegetarian Myth**, by Lierre Keith written by philosopher John Sanbonmatsu. It was so good that I contacted him to ask if we could reprint it here. Having had several other offers, he eventually decided to go for a larger readership and an expanded version can be found here: <http://www.zcommunications.org/blood-and-soil-lierre-keith-michael-pollan-and-the-trouble-with-localvore-politics-by-john-sanbonmatsu>. Readers who know there's no love lost between *AJODA* and the Znet universe (including my previous essay responding to Chris Spannos' anti-Invisible Committee screed) might be surprised that I would recommend anyone to visit any of their pages, but

Sanbonmatsu's demolition of Keith's idiocies is that important. As might be expected, Sanbonmatsu received several responses; the most vitriolic was devoted not just to his critique, but was also directed at the editors of *UTA* for having the temerity to publish it in the first place. That long-winded, repetitive, authoritarian, bad faith advice to the youngsters (sic) at *UTA* was penned by another writer unloved by this journal: Keith's co-founder of the execrable (and not just because of its sub-Maoist bullshit organizational strategy) Deep Green Resistance, Derrick Jensen. His self-important and hostile response was mercifully left out of the print version of *UTA*, but is available, along with Sanbonmatsu's reply, at: <http://uppingtheanti.org/news/>

Meanwhile, *UTA* keeps plugging along undeterred. Turnover and expansion (and now solicitations for new members) on the Editorial and Advisory Board), and a broadening of topics to include decades-old struggles of various levels of success (but mostly failure) made it look like our Canadian comrades were starting to lose focus. The Occupy movement is bound to change all that. We can look forward

to issue #14 being heavily devoted to this upsurge in all sorts of social activist experimentation, and the folks at *UTA*, with their "commitment to collective skill development and anti-oppressive group process" will fit right in. Not that there's anything wrong with that. It's just that my own experiences at Occupy Oakland have mitigated against many of the failed processes and skills that the professional Leftists have tried to inject into it; doubtless, Occupy Oakland, given the heavy influence that anarchists have brought to it, has a substantially different look and feel than the bulk of other Occupies around the US. My sense is that if any of the more turgid theoreticians at *UTA* tried to make their presence known at OO in any significant organizational manner, they'd be surprised at a lackluster reception. Still, their kind of Popular Frontish activist strategy appears to have retained some credibility among "the 99%" – which is certainly one more problem with that meme. With any luck, however, the experiences of *UTA* contributors at various Occupies will have a salutary influence on their particular brand of Leninist organizing dusted with anarchist ideas. [LJ]



Ekintza Zuzena/ekintza@sindominio.net

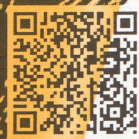
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My Date

with the Accused of Tarnac

by Lawrence Jarach

IT SEEMS LIKE THE CONTROVERSY and notoriety surrounding *The Coming Insurrection* by The Invisible Committee just won't go away. Maybe that's a good thing. Many of the ideas and activities that are related to this little book are still important enough for the editors of this journal to continue to publish essays, reviews, and letters about it. Elsewhere, rightly or wrongly, plenty is being said relating *TCI* to the various #Occupy sites around the country and internationally; certainly at #OccupyOakland, there was plenty of the sharing of resources and space that is discussed in it (in the realm of contemporary political philosophy, this is one aspect of Communization).

The people arrested and detained in France for allegedly writing this "manual of terrorism" (French Minister of Justice) or for engaging in actions that were inspired by it became known as the Tarnac 9 (a tenth was arrested near Paris). Denying that they – or indeed anyone else – were members of The Invisible Committee, and on the advice of their lawyers, they have adopted the collective label "The Accused of Tarnac."

I helped set up a large event and a small event for our guests, the former at Station 40, an anarchist activist collective living/community space in San Francisco, the latter at the Long Haul Infoshop in Berkeley. The Accused wanted the larger one to be an open debate about the ideas and strategies outlined in *TCI* and *Call*, with as many

critical people in attendance as possible, while the smaller one would be more of a socializing event among friendly people.

Prior to the arrival of the Accused, I exchanged several emails with M (whom I'd met several years before); much of the exchange was centered on what to do about the presumed law enforcement tail (whether French security, Interpol, the Feds, or any of their numerous subcontractors). Assuming that the three of them would be under some kind of scrutiny at the airport, he suggested some rather elaborate scenarios for evading whoever would be following them. My primary question (not really an objection) was what would happen when they showed up to one or either of their announced speaking events; wouldn't the cops then have them again, with only a 24-36 hour gap in whatever surveillance they might be under? I could understand the concern with being followed, but it's not as if their faces, and relevant information about their stateside associates aren't already known. Folks coming to their public events might have been concerned about being newly brought to the attention of the cops, but those of us who've been doing anything that could even remotely be considered dangerous to the smooth operation of the status quo are certainly already under casual or intense surveillance. The decade-old (if not older) discourse of Security Culture should have alerted folks to that. I insisted on picking them

up together after they passed through Customs.

Once I had collected them, and because they had not eaten well on their flight, I took them to my favorite taqueria in San Francisco's Mission District, coincidentally about a mile from where they would be staying. We were soon joined by J and C, who would be moderating the larger event, and C's partner R, who's been involved in translating many French texts; C and R would be housing them. Only J was known to M before this trip, and I don't know if M knew that J and the other moderator identify as Marxists, nor did I know if the folks at Station 40 knew. This would eventually create some trouble.

The Long Haul get together was pleasant and intimate, giving all of us a chance to get to know each other and chat about the Tarnac case and how slowly French jurisprudence moves; the case could last another several years. Meanwhile, the lives of the Accused are more or less in limbo. Careers are suspended, plans can't be concretized, and moving somewhere else is out of the question. There's no such thing as a speedy trial in France if the state doesn't want it.

The Station 40 event was well attended, with probably close to a hundred people crammed into the main room. What was billed as a discussion/debate ended up being more of a lecture with little time for Q&A due to a couple of quirks. The moderators, who were familiar with

TCI and the rest of what might be called the Tiquun tendency and/or corpus, are Marxists who are very much interested in the contemporary theory of Communization (one pole of which is represented by Tiquun). They wanted the conversation to go in a certain direction and to facilitate that, gave a list of questions to the Accused the night before. The result was a presentation by M (the only one of the three whose command of English was adequate to having such a public discussion) incorporating most of their answers. The format was unexpected; most people likely would have preferred more of a personal engagement with our guests (especially considering that most of the anarchists there probably hadn't read either text). So it was a little boring. The moderators didn't actually moderate anything until the truncated Q&A, and even then, J was almost completely silent, allowing C to dominate, even to the point where she presumed to answer a question for the Accused – after paraphrasing the question in such a way to make her presumptive answer sound better.

Needless to say, the public reception (at least as portrayed on internet forums the next day) was mostly negative. Ideas that were discussed in *Call* and *TCI* were few, as a large part of the presentation was geared toward deflecting the Marxist bias of the moderators. Most of the questions after the presentation were from Marxists as well. Despite M's repeated assurances to the contrary, the Marxists in attendance insisted on trying to corral the ideas of *TCI* into the language of political economy, the bastion of Marxist analysis. Most contemporary (and vaguely non-party) Marxists, knowing that almost all of their theoretical possibilities have been relegated to the dustbin of history, only have the heady brew of Communization to draw from, and seem to be desperate to have even

one live Communizer acknowledge its compatibility with their precepts and assumptions.¹ In a strange twist of fate, it's now Marxists who are trying to catch a ride on the coattails of anarchists. Or at least quasi-anarchists.²

That discussion continued the next morning at a brunch hosted by C and R. When I met with the Accused the following day before I took them back to the airport, the first thing M said was "We've made two more enemies." He was referring to J and one of his sidekicks, who even more forcefully tried to insist that Marxism is compatible with – even to the point of being indistinguishable from – the Tiquun/*TCI* pole of Communization theory. The Accused would have none of it, refusing to be forced into the Procrustean Bed of political economy, labor statistics, and the endless examinations of relations of production that comprise almost all Marxist philosophical and theoretical discussions. The people around the insurrectionary pole of Communization, of whom the Accused are the most emblematic, are decidedly more interested in a critique of relations of power rather than production, and in destroying economy rather than in fine-tuning their analysis of it.

And so the tensions within the current of Communization continue.³ The Accused attended and participated in a two-day conference in New York after they left the Bay Area, and from what I hear, their presentation was no more well-received there than it was here. Too bad. Perhaps if more people actually read significant parts of the Tiquun corpus – and more importantly, abandoned their own Marxist analytical categories – they might get more out of the texts and conversing with the people accused of complicity in writing and publishing them. (A)

Endnotes

- 1 There remain some diehard fans of the progressively out-of-touch Negri (with his Multitude, an absurd and internally contradictory diffuse monolith), the (ex?) Maoist Badiou (with his pre-postmodern neo-Hegelian fixation on Being and Truth), and the increasingly chuckle-inducing Žižek (with his nostalgic Stalinism without Stalin). The paucity of contemporarily relevant Marxist theory has forced the fans of Communization to accept what anarchists have been saying – about power, about hierarchy, about value – for over a century.
- 2 American anarchists have a distinct genealogy from European anarchists. In Europe (and in France in particular), the majority of folks who have a fondness for Tiquun and *TCI* don't call themselves anarchists; readers and supporters of this journal would find most European anarchists even more tiresome than our American contemporaries.
- 3 See *Communization and its Discontents: Contestation, Critique, and Contemporary Struggles* (Minor Compositions/Autonomea, 2011; available through Little Black Cart) for a longer examination from both poles. A quick and dirty – and unfair, but the Big Ideas are too complex for the purposes of this column – summary: Tiquun and The Invisible Committee represent what I would call the negative pole, where the discourse centers on destroying institutionalized power, replacing it with what they call Friendship (akin to how insurrectionary anarchists discuss relations of affinity); *Théorie Communiste* and Endnotes (who nonetheless differ in important respects) represent what I would call the positive pole, where the discourse centers on constructing relations of production that are rid of value.

LETTERS

Talking Back to the Radio

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/philosopherszone/doing-without-a-ruler-in-defence-of-anarchism/3262210#transcript>

ABC RADIO NATIONAL'S 'Philosopher's Zone' broadcast on May 3, 2008, and rebroadcast on December 20, 2008, a program titled 'Doing without a ruler: in defence of anarchism'.

Having listened to the broadcast with transcript in hand I found only two errors in the typing. Page 3: "There are lots of situations in which we find it necessary to go along with something we think is a bad idea, just because not going (along) would be worse still." Page 6: "...he described Leadbelly as 'the toughest (man) on the...'".

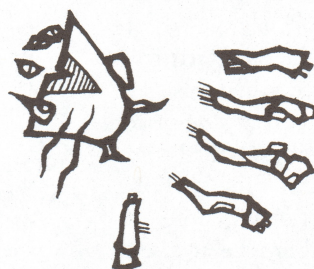
Additionally, I have the following comments.

I. "So if we just stick with the politics and perhaps leave economics aside for the moment, but do left and right cease to have much meaning in this context?" – Alan Saunders

Politics to me has always been synonymous with conflict and economics has always been political, so I don't know how one can leave it aside, especially when one makes reference to the left and right. For, if I am not mistaken, I believe even Karl Marx, who spent the majority of his years developing the idea that economics is the key to history, began in his later years to speculate that race could be. So the politics of race and economics, respectively, in most countries in the 20th century, represented by the extreme right and the extreme left, cannot be set aside, though they can, like all dualities, be transcended. I believe that is what Marshall McLuhan achieved with his concept of media, cryptically

expressed with 'the medium is the message'. (1)

Furthermore, it may be more accurate to say that the left/right paradigm was created by democracy (Saunders' 'politics'?) or, more accurately, since Aristotle pitted constitutional polity against mob-rule, by the reaction against democracy, rather than infer that it was economics. For it was in the autumn of 1789 in Versailles, France, that two factions intent on drafting a consti-



tution gathered. By accident, those in favor of a republic stood to the left of the speaker, and those for a monarchy to his right.

So the paradigm does not cease to have meaning in either case, as Saunders seems to infer it could, provided Leftwing democracy (as opposed to Rightwing popular government) has not triumphed by stealth. (2) For there is the prevailing naïve view that democracy can sublimate conflict (i.e. politics, the left/right paradigm) in a positive way. Aristotle, however, knew better: "The ultimate form of democracy is tyranny."

II. "And so I think of my anarchism as the starting point, not as the concluding point of my political journey." – Robert Paul Wolff

This quote expresses an acceptance of living in a dualistic world, and thus a world that is incapable of transcending politics/conflict. Anarchy is thus purely ideological, making anarchism

too narrow ("...my political activity is founded on economic concerns and moral concerns and foreign policy concerns, which anarchism simply doesn't address.").

I cannot accept that. Anarchy to me transcends and thereby categorically opposes all theological, philosophical, and ideological constructs. Anarchism exists at all three levels of construction and is in essence synonymous with the natural process of self-deconstruction, (3) that is inherent in every stance including economic, moral, and diplomatic ones. Anarchy is the end; anarchism (i.e. anarcho-____) is the means. Benjamin Tucker: "Anarchy does not simply mean opposed to archos, or political leader. It means opposed to arche. Now arche, in the first instance, means beginning, origin. From this it comes to mean a first principle, an element, then first place, supreme power, sovereignty, dominion, command, authority, and finally a sovereignty, an empire, a realm, a magistracy, a governmental office." (4)

I have not read any of Wolff's books. After listening to this program I have no desire to do so. Defining himself as a Marxist, I see him as part of a problem – a problem that has been sucking the life out of anarchism for the better part of a century.

Thanks to Wolff, Bookchin, and others, I suspect it will be a long while yet before people curious about anarchy and anarchism will refrain from asking a Marxist.

(1) "McLuhan's theory of change, emphasizing the means of communication rather than the means of production, would supersede Marxism, he confidently predicted." [p. 44, 'Marshall McLuhan: The Medium and the Messenger' by Philip Marchand (Toronto: Random House, 1989)]. Also 'Media Transcendence' by Lance Strate at

http://www.chass.toronto.edu/mcluhan-studies/v1_iss3/1_3art8.htm

(2) Re. democracy vs. popular government. Henry Sumner Maine, a conservative critic of democracy, writes in his 'Popular Government' (1886): "...the inquiry into the history of these [political] institutions, and the attempt to estimate their true value by the results of such an inquiry, are seriously embarrassed by a mass of ideas and beliefs which have grown up in our day on the subject of one particular form of government, that extreme form of popular government which is called Democracy. ...[These ideas and beliefs] are well known to have sprung from the teaching of Jean Jacques Rousseau, who believed that men emerged from the primitive natural condition by a process which made every form of government, except Democracy, illegitimate. ...Democracy is commonly described as having an inherent superiority over every other form of government. ...It is thought to be full of the promise of blessings to mankind; yet if it fails to bring with it these blessings, or even proves to be prolific of the heaviest calamities, it is not held to deserve condemnation. These are the familiar marks of a theory which claims to be independent of experience and observations..." Quote available at <http://www.blupete.com/Literature/Biographies/Law/Maine.htm>

(3) Re. self-deconstruction: 'The Self-Deconstruction of the Liberal Order' by Jean-Pierre Dupuy in 'Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture', Volume 2 (Spring 1995) at <http://www.uibk.ac.at/theol/cover/contagion/x1.html>

(4) Page 11, less the italics, 'Mosaic Modernism: Anarchism, Pragmatism, Culture' by David Kaplec (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000)

B. Scott, Australia

Answering All His Own Questions

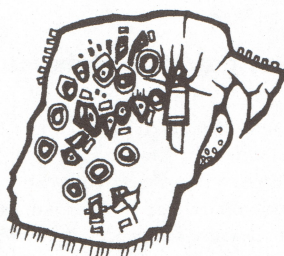
REGARDING THE ANARCHISTS taking over the country, I don't seriously think Anarchists would ever be able to do such a thing. Anarchists have no plan, no strategy for taking power and nothing but vague notions as to what to do after taking power. How could any serious minded citizen follow the leadership of a group that has no place to take them? Anarchists promise paradise on earth, but they have no pathway to get there. They talk about different ideal ways to structure a society, based on committees, consensus or at best a town council. But they have no concrete proposals as to how to deal with the current set of problems we encounter or do they? Perhaps we are simply looking in the wrong place.

Anarchists believe in a voluntary based society. But so do Libertarians. How do you maintain a sufficient level of services when you have a totally volunteer society? The Libertarian answer is simply let the market take care of it. If there is a need some bright entrepreneur with figure out how to provide that service and make a profit at it. That is market capitalism. Privatize hospitals, utilities, road maintenance, welfare for the poor, prisons, the military, you name it and it can be privatized. We have seen quite a bit of that under the Carter/Bush de-regulate and privatize presidencies.

What do Anarchists propose? Well we have coop bookstores and some coop groceries still exist. There is "Food Not Bombs" a free food for the homeless program that serves a vegetarian meal to people on the street once a week in various cities. There is the "Homes Not Jails" housing rights group in San Francisco and Boston, that occupies abandoned buildings and lets homeless people squat in them. They do secret and publicly notified occupations to advertise the plight of the homeless. More interesting is the "Take Back the Land" based in Miami who occupy foreclosed homes. This group initially built Umoja Village on public land with the help of local anarchists. It was burned down mysteriously 6 months later. But these activities in the USA are small

potatoes compared to the activity going on in Latin America and South Africa.

Latin America has the liberated zone of the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico where there has been a stand-off with the Mexican Army since 1994. At this time the Zapatistas are more of a consciousness raising and



propaganda organization than an active military and political presence with some 32 villages under their control in and around the Lacandon Forest. Their politics are reminiscent of the original Zapatista Liberation Army with its slogans of Land & Liberty, they represent agrarian peasant and indigenous peoples interests. In Mexico that is a big deal there are some 20 million Native Americans. But although they now claim libertarian socialist goals, their founders were from a Maoist group based in Mexico City. Liberation theologians in the 1980's helped them and brought them to Chiapas in 1983 where they worked with the indigenous population to defend their rights and foment revolt.

But as much as people like the EZLN, they are small potatoes compared to the South African "Poor

People's Alliance" which is made up of several direct action organizations that are specifically anti-hierarchical, democratic and will not participate in electoral politics. They don't call themselves Anarchists, but they have taken on a lot of the principals of Anarchism through the Left Marxist Jaques Ranciere, who is considered atheoretical source for much of their ideology. One group based in Kwa-Zulu-Natal is "Abahla base Mjondolo" which has battled with the city authorities in Durban to gain recognition of the rights for the shantytown dwellers to exist and for the implementation of government services including water and electricity. They also fight evictions and have gained in principal the government's aid in improving the housing for the poor. They are autonomous, have no NGO control, their goal is living Communism by recreating the commons from below with a series of communes.

Another group is the "Anti Eviction Campaign" based in Cape Town. They are the oldest of this new wave of anti-hierarchical, anti-NGO, anti-political party groups. They have 15 chapters and their leaders are called coordinators because they are facilitators not Leninist style bosses. They do direct action sit-ins and demonstrations at homes where people are to be evicted to stop the authorities. If that fails and people are evicted they move them back in and if they are removed permanently they destroy the property to make sure that it won't be used again by the ruling classes. These groups are

working with thousands of people in South Africa. Again if you want to get big you have to go to Brazil where the MSI or "Landless Workers Movement" has some 1.5 million members. They have their own university the "Florestan Fernandes School" in Sao Palo. This organization founded in 1984 with a mixture of Liberation Theology, Paulo Freire Pedagogy, Marxism and admiration for Cuba, yet they came up with a relatively anti-hierarchical structure. Each member has to be part what is called the 'nucleo de base', a grouping of 10 to 15 families who select a man and a woman as representatives to the 'settlement group', and in turn they are part of the 'regional group'. This regional group elects members of the "State Coordinating Body" which is made up of about 20 members from each state with a total of about 400 members 90% of whom are active members of a nucleo de base. The theory being that this keeps them grounded in the real needs of the people. They fight Monsanto and against the spreading of genetically modified seeds in Brazil. They occupy abandoned land and then fight in court for the right of the people to stay there and win. They have an environmental plan and have support groups around the world. Anarchist, no but pretty damn close for a Marxist based group. These are heavyweights in World Social Forum and the Global Justice Movement. We in the USA need to look to these models in the so called third world to see where the future of the social revolution is to

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come. The beast is being surrounded by a pack of radical dogs and pretty soon it will be stuck up in a tree. Then we can just shoot it or wait for it to starve.

Anarchism may not have the answers but it is part of a current that includes a lot of people who identify as Marxists. I think we are coming to a time where both of those theoretical systems will be outmoded and some new synthesis will be the working theoretical frame for the future.

Gary Rumor, CA

Correspondence Diminished Debord

GREETINGS,

Just who is behind the "Twilight in the City..." comic/flyer? I did laugh out loud (as it, even, was all about me!). Amazingly, there must be "a fraction of the public" (not just me) reflected here ...

Your review of *Correspondence* was right on. For me, it diminishes Debord's "legacy," what a waste of time and effort he sacrificed.

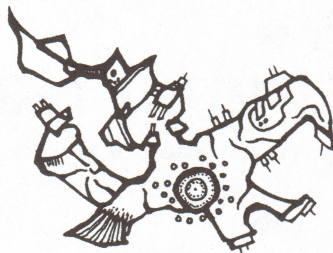
Best,
Gary, Florida

The Scarlet Silencers in Canyon De Chelly

IT WAS DURING THE "MOON WHEN geese shed their feathers" when the ignoble missionary Sepulveda stared painfully at the line of executioners before him. by the judgment of the holy priests of the Zuni Nation, he had been found guilty of sacrilege toward the Zuni rain gods, of bodily blocking the passageways of the Kivas, of breaking sacred prayer sticks into small fragments, of spitting in the sacred cornmeal and threatening to condemn the souls of the people who had gone through the tribe's purification ceremony. He had also been found guilty of burning several deerskin moccasins in an effort to force the people wear Western-styled boots, of slapping people who continued to use the original Zuni language and of physically injuring the body of one of the Shakalo dancers, and treason for haranguing the tribal elders for refusing to sign a treaty.

Following directives in several convulsive and graphic dreams, the head priest had instructed the other priests in the proper manner to prepare Sepulveda's body for execution in Canyon De Chelly. The hair on Sepulveda's head had been shaven into the form of a cross and a pile of sheep dung mixed into it. All the hair under his arms and on his legs had been shaven off and any hair strands that were left had been plucked out; every pubic hair in his pelvic area had either been shaven off or plucked out and his procreative organ had been washed with demon rum; his eyebrows had been shaven off, his face had been washed with the accumulated saliva of the tribe. The rest of his body had been washed with the accumulated urine of women of the tribe.

His stark naked body and bowstrung arms and legs were stretched out to their maximum physical limitations on a wooden cross which had been constructed for him; and a string of sinew, just above the Adam's apple, nearly strangled him though it was slack enough to allow him to occasionally swallow his saliva which slightly moistened his dry and cracked tongue. Sweat, like hot grease, streamed down his pale face which was wrinkled like a pair of overused blue jeans. The executioners tested the strength of their silver bowstrings and examined the garlic-dipped arrowheads as hot blasts of summer wind hugged their bodies. The missionary weakly groaned, "Who are you? For God's sake, who



are you? I have a right to know before I die."

They proudly answered him accordingly:

"I am Glooscap!"

"I am Raven the Giant!"

"I am White Buffalo-Calf Woman!"

"I am Stone Ribs!"

"I am Sweet Medicine!"

"I am Child of the Water!"

"I am U'ma'a!!!"

The missionary silently prayed for the power of the Judeo-Christian God as the seven medicine arrows, like guided missiles, sailed toward him from the seven culture-heroes.

McArthur Gunter, Maryland

Solipsism & Science

DEAR AJODA,

I agree that Science is but one "symbolic system" among several which humans impose on the world - I have read all the major works of "Philosophy of Science" and arrive at that conclusion. But as a good post-Kantian, I take this premise to its full conclusion: this *is* the world we "know." I spent about a year mired inside the event horizon of solipsism; since there is no logical way out, I finally realized that we get out *existentially* - "whatever" reality/existence ultimately is, we must live it as we know it. If it's all the illusion of a Cartesian evil genius, that is what we get - *all* we get - and so we just live in it. To paraphrase Hume, the mug of beer in front of me may be illusion; I can't prove it really exists - but I enjoy beer, so I might as well drink it anyway.

My point is, Science is the best symbolic system we possess for perceiving and comprehending the world, so we should let it inform us. Only dismissing it, *a priori*, can lead to such conclusions as that no one can actually observe the struggle for survival. I'd like to be told where, anywhere but in human society, anyone has ever *not* seen it. To dismiss it as "capitalist propaganda" is to go to another extreme.

The idea that evolutionary theory is irrelevant to anarchism because "the 'struggle for survival' is an ideological framework that privileges a capitalist understanding (competition for scarce resources) over an anarchist one (cooperation to keep kin alive)" is common, but is both biologically *and* anachronistically erroneous. First of all, it entails a misunderstanding of evolutionary theory, or the misconception that the *political* ideal of "Social Darwinism" is synonymous with the

scientific ideal of (neo) Darwinism *per se*. There is no such thing as "Social Darwinism" in the ideas of actual science - *that* was invented to endorse capitalist privileges. There is only Darwinism itself.

Secondly, real evolution includes both competition *and* cooperation. Darwin never perceived the process



of evolution in humans as primarily between individuals. Rather, in *The Descent of Man* he clearly proposed it to be primarily a process of competition between groups - what he called the "corporate body." Every human group, Darwin observed, possesses a unique set of genes, and natural selection is thus a contest between such genomes *within* the groups, cooperation is the primary rule.

Contrary to popularized conceptions, then, evolutionary theory includes the same cooperation Kropotkin famously discussed in *Mutual Aid*. Indeed, competition and cooperation must be comprehended as two sides of the same evolutionary coin. We might use as an analogy a wrestling team: its primary objective is to win, as a group, against other teams. And to ensure maximum competitiveness in this "struggle," it necessarily includes secondary competition among members, complementary to team cooperation, so that the "fittest" individuals guide and represent the team (there are numerous wrestlers in every weight class and thus there are "wrestle-offs" every week to determine who represents the team at the varsity level, junior-varsity level, or as backup). There is never a question of priority - cooperation within, competition without. Thus with human groups in nature.

The fact that evolution among humans has always been understood by scientists to proceed primarily between groups not individuals - after

all, superior genes can only be passed on *by a group* – has been lost to most laypersons, and is seldom stated explicitly by academics, because of negative interpretations such as racism and nazism. The nazis, for example, decided to disregard all of mankind's higher aspects and reduce socio-political theory to an *animal* evolutionary struggle between races, and due to the resulting atrocities, a mostly "politically correct" academia has decided to pretend that the myth of strict individualist struggle is accurate. All biological discovery since Darwin's original insight proves otherwise. Humans are *social* animals and as such can only evolve *socially* – through mutual struggle and mutual aid.

The Social Contract of Rousseau is the central myth of bourgeois (capitalist) society, without a supporting fact in the entire history of the world, and thus must be rejected. Society is a natural phenomenon, and as such evolved – sociobiologists demonstrated this beginning in the 1970s, but were largely dismissed by politically correct academics for the reason explained above. Recognizing that humans are by nature political animals, we should recognize by politics that humans are natural. Francis Bacon advised us: *Nature cannot be commanded except by being obeyed*. Although the apparent ruthlessness of natural selection appalls modern sentimentalists, it is nevertheless the force that has guided life from microbe to mankind, and allowed to maintain its course in our midst, could lead us to things even more astounding.

Only anarchism brings humans as "close to nature" as is possible while respecting their higher attributes, and since Science fully endorses anarchistic ideals above all other socio-political agendas, due to their inherent conduciveness to evolutionary process, it is a shame, and really a disgrace, that anarchists have mostly taken the easy road of eschewing Science in lieu of business-as-usual Marxoid Leftism. As a group, we have chosen propaganda over proof. We could show the world, irrefutably, a new way to maintain society while simultaneously continuing to evolve naturally, devoid of all negative sentiments, but instead we sell out to political correctness and

propagate the underlying myth of the New Left.

This is an error with regard to the relation between judgments about matters of fact and value judgments. Worse yet, most anarchists – not merely in error, but in *delusion* – declare without a single fact in support or even a condescension to argument, that prescriptive conclusions cannot be validly drawn from premises that are descriptive. In other words, that scientific premises cannot provide us with adequate grounds for cogently reaching conclusions that consist of socio-political statements.

Spinoza pointed out long ago that a majority of people mistake "good" and "right" for their own individual desires. That is, they tend to attach these names to whatever they hap-



pen to desire, and then to delude themselves into thinking that cause and effect are reversed – that those things are *objectively* "good" and "right" and that is why they desire them. In this context, I think most anarchists ignore the science of evolution for the same reason they reject the concept of property: they are afraid to engage in the natural process of competition. If you lack the courage to *defend* property, you simply and conveniently *deny* property as a legitimate concept; and if you lack the courage to *engage* in competition, as an individual or as part of a group, you simply and conveniently *eschew* competition as a legitimate concept.

Competition is not exploitation. There is no slavery or oppression in the struggle for survival – just the free reign of Natural Law. I am an anarchist because I value liberty above all else, including so-called "rights." I don't want to be absolutely free so that I can be equal to others; I want to be free to be *better* than others.

Peter Georgacarakos
03029-036
PO Box 3000
Pine Knot, KY 42635

Is Wolfi Off the Deep End?

DEAR AJODA,
i want 2 keep this short bc i'm sure the coming issues R go'n 2 have plenty of mail over T.C.I. i found Wolfi's "critical look" disorientating after reading T.C.I. (i got issue 70/71 B4 the book) & wondered if Wolfi was mandated 2 put a negative light on the text.

Wolfi's pc surprised me bc most of hir writings have been well founded, if not a "lil" 2 academy. & if people choose 2 write that type of mental masturbation, so B it (do they seriously believe the most indoctrinated/programmed/comfortable segments of the culture will B effected bc some1 uses their style of language?). Perhaps it's the writing style of T.C.I. which distracted Wolfi 2 the point that content slipped through hir fingers.

A huge pc is Wolfi's use of Glen Beck's assessment that T.C.I. is a "communist [i.e. Marxist] book." i found it confusing how Wolfi could "read through the book four times for clarification" & "skimmed it several times," yet miss N the Intro. (pg 15) how "...COMMUNISM. We know it's a term to be used w/ caution... because our worst enemies have used it, & continue to do so. We insist. Certain words are like battlegrounds = their meaning, revolutionary or reactionary, is a victory, to be torn from the jaws of struggle." Also N the final section (Insurrection, pgs 117-8), ideas about 'communes' R explored thoroughly & have no similarities 2 any of Marx's ideas (pre- or post-modern).

It felt like the 2nd foot-hold Wolfi tried 2 use was the condemning of T.C.I.'s utilization of the term 'individual.' Wolfi states how "The entire 1st part is dedicated 2 attacking individuality as alienation" (pg 60, AJODA); but when i read the text i found the author(s) attacking the individual alienation as produced & maintained by Western culture/ the state.

Does Wolfi believe hir definitions reign supreme?

Just concerned if Wolfi hasn't gone off the deep end, maybe this was the final CrimethInc-ish straw break'n the academy's back. The

poets and word-smiths will play w/"abstractions, actions & relationships as the source of agency N the world" (Wolfi's words) & not everybody is goin 2 fit N Wolfi's definition of "anarchist"...

SD Note 2 the folks at AJODA =
Seriously fuck'n LOVE all y'all, esp. 4 maintain'n someth'n tangible N fucked off world of screen text that keeps ideas btx our ears instead of utilizing our hands.

Much love,
D (Eric McDavid) #16209-097
FCI Terminal Island
PO Box 3007
San Pedro, CA 90731

Worth More Than Money

DEAR LJ, JH, LD,
I thank you for your support – a stand like this has been long in coming, perhaps not overdue, but in good timing. The industry, capitalism, and the rich people's army has sufficiently taken over the States (if not the world), with their idea of money and fear based propaganda which has tried to convince humans that we are incapable of identifying justice, when it is their court system that is utterly blind to it. Purposefully of course – we are locked up for at least three weeks, in which time they hope we pay them ludicrous amounts of bail money, before we are even charged with anything.

We are "cut off" from everything – except, of course, television, prescription pills and junk food. Hell, we prisoners are the most profitable thing a lot of corporate fucks do – not to mention the necessity built in the gov. around our tax revenue. Circular mentality, based solely off of the "need" for money – if we're not earning it for them in some sort of factory or fast food place, we earn it for them in their jail/court system. For they do not judge based on humanity, no, but solely based on monetary value – every type of "punishment" they instigate against us is in the form of money, i.e., court fees, mandatory classes \$25/week, probation we pay to take a pee... it goes on and on and must come now to an end. Hopefully, there are some that are waking up, enough to want



to stand outside of their central bank & the rule of the almighty dollar (which, ironically, has no value backing it whatsoever – it is naught but an *idea* of value). We, the people, are *worth* far more than money.

Thanks again for your support and for sending a letter; I enjoy my opportunities to rant a bit and hope you are all doing well. For anarchy!

Amelia Nicol, CO

Postal Calamity

AJODA,

Sorry folks, unable to continue with subscription to the 'zine. Calamitous international mailing costs having forced overseas subs sky high – literally – mean no option but to miss out on my favourite read. Very sad and suspect (but hope not), other non-U.S.A. subscribers will have to do likewise. No reflection on the journal, which, in my opinion, remains far and away the best read available of its kind just about anywhere. I sincerely hope you are able to remain in print in the U.S. despite all the barriers up against you domestically as well. Good luck and thanks for the past many years quality writing. Regret that I am having to do this... respect you guys in spades!

Best wishes to all the team.

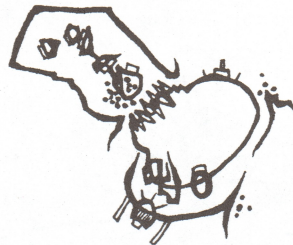
FD, England

God is an Intelligent Germ

DEAR COMRADES,

An associate of mine told me I'd really like this quarterly, so I thought I'd see if you'd send me a sample copy of ANARCHY. I'm a white woman (Gen 21:4) in politics, who's nonetheless bisexual, a good witch in the Abelar-Gran tradition, and a cosmic communist to boot! I don't believe that any person, group, country, or even planet should have more power than another. Power is the source of chaos! Neither do I believe that it's somehow "wrong" for children to be sexually playful with adults. Call that "anarchist" politics if you want. The only real problem with it all is that culture carries a power beyond its time. What we need, then, is a transitional socialism... Through careful study and silent stillness, I've found that it took 9.02987 "days" (Qur'an s 18:22, Rev 1:9, 21:12-21, 22:14, Ecl 1:9-10, 2 Pet 3:8, etc) to create the "world" (Qs 2:29, Psm 147:4, Job 9:9, Eph. 6:12, etc), according to Barber & Suhorn, and there are actually 4 "people" (Acts 2:2, 2:3, Mat 3:16, 2 Joel 2:28-9 via Rev 12:3 = 11:7, 13:1, 13:11, & 21:2) to the YHWH lordship: Noné-El Ruwánzorí the Mother (Prov 18:10 KJV, Isa 2:2, Ezek 40:2, Qs 18:16, 17:110, Gen 17:1, etc), Nyame-Borebore the Daughter (Mark 3:22-3), Gningone-Sophia the Holy Spirit (Luke 7:35), and our app. 7,255 year-old androgynous forebear Tabitha Qumi (Mark 5:41 = Gen 2:5-7), according to Picknett & Pendell. The celestial lordship, of course, is not the same thing. Is there any chance you could help me pronounce the Swahili names? God can only truly be known only in the language of her people! I could also use the list of representatives for the women who rule the world (Isis-WICCE) and their sea gate to the US (the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians), especially the Uganda reps' names, a crude (north/south) diagram of our galaxy (off the galaxy map.org, superimposed over the zodiac, & identifying the star systems (or nebulas) of Rev 2:1 - Sol (Taurus neb?), Betelgeuse (Orion neb), Sirius (Big Dog neb), Zeta 1

(Reticulum neb), Arcturus (Boetes neb), Polaris (Little Bear neb), Alpha Draconis (Vamp neb) & Rev 1:8 - Vega (Lyra neb), according to Royal & Priest, a copy of Kiersey's 70-question typology test & 16-question verifier, his 4 temperament profiles & chart, the Singer-Loomis, Kise & Maidenbaum inventories, general MBTI, and Quank's 16 type profiles., for my current research... Know where I could find a good secretary? I can only conclude that there's no corruption in the Pleiades because it's in the same direction as the lordship, but where are the stars Clarion, Tau-Ceti, 2 Epsilon Hydrae? Whenever your cosmology and anthropology are wrong,



everything you think, say, & do will be wrong! The "spirits" of Rev 3:1, of course would be primates, land mammals, aquatic ones, reptilians, insectoids, crustaceans, & walking molds. God, then, must be an intelligent germ. It looks to me like poor people in this society (esp. Rev 3:7 INTPs such as myself) are being selected for genocide because of the time of year they were born. If tribal people on this continent (Mat 10:5-7 = Gen 48), which just happens to be closest to a 50-mile wide abyss near the north pole (Job 26:7 KJV, Rev 5:3, Mat 12:40, etc), wait until after a good harvest to have children, perhaps that means babies are now (since at least 3/30/35 AD pole shift of Mat 27:5), app. 12/10/685 AD, or even more likely the one of 11/8/1308 AD – John 1:20-1) supposed to be born when our planet is shielded from the Orion nebula by our sun. (The summer solstice?) That would seem to be the direction from which evil comes (Eph 2:2 via Mat 4:1, Judg 9:23, Isa 27:1, & Exo 6:2-3). Only a rich, Albino man (Gen 27:11 & Exo 3:6) born in the summer could be the incarnation of the

archangel Jeremiel, or even the 9th Mahdi. (Rev 1:14 = Michael Cera, Isa 7:14 = Rev 1:12, Dan 12:1 = Mat 27:11 = Luke 10:19 = Rev 1:20, Dan 8:16 = 3rd "heaven," Tab 3:17 = 2nd, & Gen 4:16 = Metatron as the Cro-Magnon?) Whereas Ellis has shown this is the case of Jesus (John 1:46), Bushby has shown that such "special creations" may indeed come in quadruplets (2:11, Luke 4:31-7 & John 19:34 vs 3:3-6). How else do we explain the trinitarian phenomenon with its missing bottom heavens? Beware of the HAARP device! (Mar 7:16, 23:29, Luke 9:60, & Mat 20:19) As Velikovsky & Wilcock have made clear, the global quake of Rev 6:12 is more likely to hit on 12/10/2017 AD rather than 12/21/2012 AD (Exo 32:2-30 = Dan 7:25); Rev 8:12, 16:18, & 20:3 belong to wholly different sequences (as insinuated even by John MacArthur & Exo 9:8-12) and deserving a Book all their own. But I've also found that a biblical astrology (Qs 32:8 & 4:3 = 16 sign-constellations) has to factor in the 3 pillars of social justice (Gal 3:28 = Qs 6:83-4, 23:14 & Gen 1:26-7, & Rev 1:11 & 1 Cor-2 Thes) to be accurate. I can send you the evaluation tool I developed if you'd like. As Marx revealed for us: "All that is solid melts into air!" (Rev 21:2) Anyway, I hope you realize just what I've given you here. It has certainly been to my detriment. (All the executive officeholders in this whole world are 8 "day" creationists!) But I assume you do realize that activists make good saleswomen. I don't know why I'd want to go on living in a world where people are resurrected against their will, anyway. (Mat 12:41) I was mostly hoping you'd send me the current issue of ANARCHY journal, but any back issues you might have laying around would also be greatly appreciated. Feel free to print this letter as you see fit! All power to "crazy" black women!!

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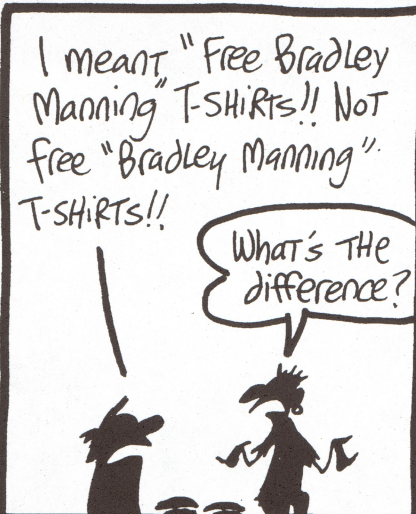
P.S. Whatever happened to the DeLeonists? My old address doesn't work for the NUP anymore!

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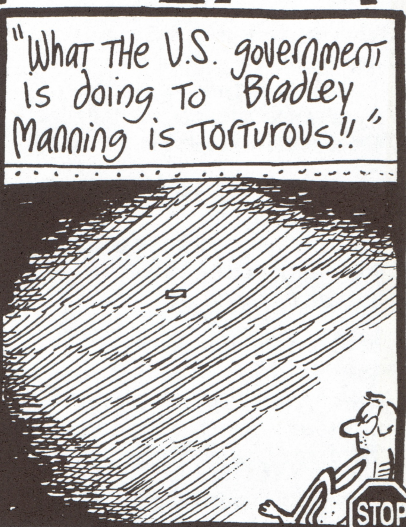
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HOW MUCH OF AN OCCUPIER ARE YOU?

1. How many committees are you on?

- ☐ There's committees?
- ☐ I'm an individualist, I don't do groups
- ☐ I friended all of them on facebook
- ☐ I quit my job to _____ for the 99%

2. How do you feel about the black bloc tactic?

- ☐ It ruined everything
- ☐ It's not strategically wise right now
- ☐ They put the pie in Occupy
- ☐ We are the heart and guts of Occupy!

3. I've participated at general assemblies:

- ☐ To preach Gandhian tactics
- ☐ To report for my committee
- ☐ To rap my dreams for the folkers
- ☐ To antagonize the pacifists

4. How many marches have you participated in?

- ☐ My work schedule...
- ☐ I stayed home from work on Nov 2
- ☐ I watched them all on livestream
- ☐ Occupy is an unending march to liberation!

5. Are you part of the 99%?

- ☐ Yes, but I aspire to be part of the 1%
- ☐ Yes, but it doesn't mean anything
- ☐ I *still* have no idea what that means
- ☐ You really think the 1% would read this magazine?

6. Have you done any jail support?

- ☐ They must have wanted to get arrested...
- ☐ I gave out the NLG phone number a few times
- ☐ I picked up and hosed off all my teargassed friends
- ☐ I'm still in jail, fucker!

7. What inspires you most about Occupy?

- ☐ Nothing, it's really incoherent
- ☐ The masses and masses of people
- ☐ It makes internet social tools feel edgy
- ☐ The diversity of people and tactics

8. What stops you from occupying more?

- ☐ I need to work
- ☐ Threats of violence from the police
- ☐ Threats of violence from the black bloc
- ☐ Its incoherent philosophy

9. What has #00 shown us?

- ☐ Anarchists are violent young men in black
- ☐ Violent threats aren't very popular
- ☐ Sleep deprivation and tear gas are not good for your health
- ☐ There are still no good cops

10. What's the underlying purpose of the occupy movement?

- ☐ Shift public opinions
- ☐ Reclaim property and fight injustices
- ☐ Test our ability to endure pain compliance holds and tear gas
- ☐ Stop greedy fools from killing the planet!

Check all that apply or write in your own answers. Mail us a copy at:

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Rating scale for this questionnaire will be published in an upcoming issue.

KEY FOR ISSUE 70/71:

"How Insurrectionary Are You?"

Bubbles are numbered from the left to the right and from the top to the bottom. For all questions, give yourself 1 point for choosing the first bubble, 2 for bubble two, 3 for bubble three, or 4 points for bubble four. If you answered more than one bubble in a question, give yourself the average value of the two answers.

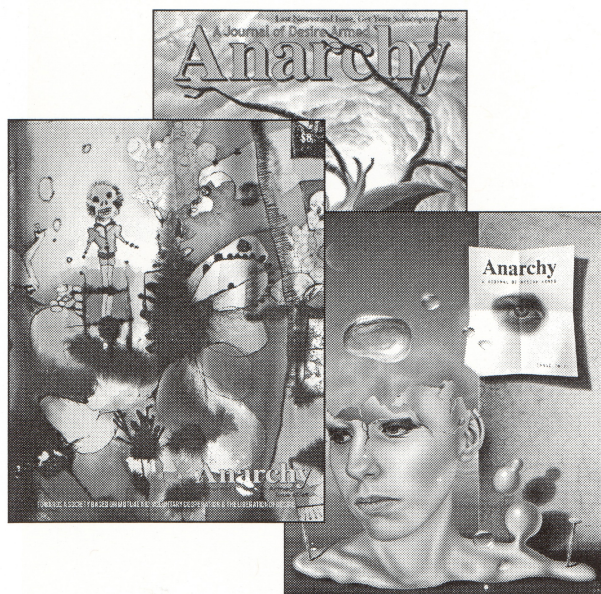
Add all your points together for the survey.

If you wrote in your own answers subtract 1 point for each extra answer; you are unconfined by our bubbles! Use the chart below to see where you fall on our scale...

Totals	How Insurrectionary Are You?
0-11	Consider Greece for your next vacation; they have less violent cops and fewer pacifists to interfere with your fun.
12- 22	Your practicality is at war with your desires. Fight more, argue less!
23-33	You are in danger of becoming a theorist! We recommend a Molotov a day to keep the academics at bay.
34 +	Your non-violent purity is clouding your clarity. Try BDSM or see a dominatrix near you for help with this affliction.

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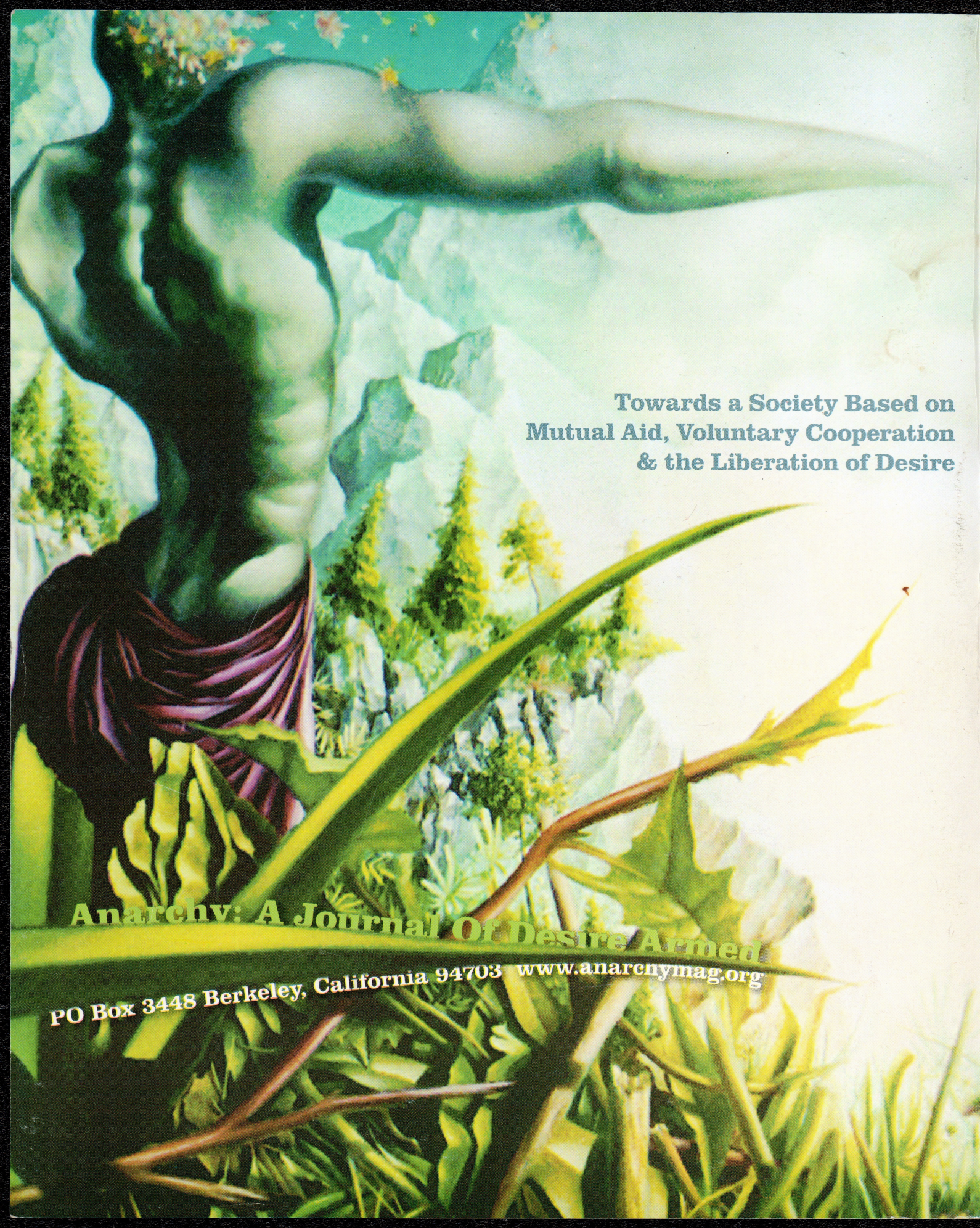
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A surrealist painting of a muscular man with a greenish-tan complexion, wearing a red dhoti. He is standing in a lush, green landscape with mountains in the background. The man's right arm is raised, and his left arm is extended forward. The background features a range of mountains under a pale sky, with a small body of water visible in the distance. The foreground is filled with large, green, spiky leaves and a long, thin, brown stem.

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